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LIGUORIAN

Christmas Gifts for the Family

The Four Meanings of Christmas

What Is an Indifferent Catholic?

The Bridge God Built in the Sky



THE Liguorian

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Contents for December, 1958

The Four Meanings of Christmas.....	1
Code of Catholic Conduct.....	9
Christmas Gifts for the Family.....	10
The Christ-child's Neighbors.....	14
Thoughtlessness of Married Brothers and Sisters	18
Overpopulation?	20
What Is an Indifferent Catholic?.....	22
Should Mid-Teen-Agers Marry?.....	26
A Child before the Crib.....	28
How To Promote Interracial Justice.....	31
Readers Retort	35
What about Vivisection?.....	40
The Bridge God Built in the Sky.....	42
Should the Invalidly Married Be Excluded from Christmas Family Parties?.....	47
Pointed Paragraphs	49
Liguoriana: The Church and the Bible.....	53
Book Reviews	56
Lucid Intervals	61

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THE LIGUORIAN

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THE FOUR MEANINGS OF CHRISTMAS

Look for the meaning of Christmas
in your own life and in your own soul.
If it has no meaning there, it is no time
for you to celebrate, but rather to grieve.

DONALD F. MILLER, C.S.S.R.

IT IS always necessary, before and during the Christmas season, to make a vigorous mental effort to probe into its real meaning for our lives. This is necessary because it has become so easy to be distracted by, and to be content with, the superficial surroundings and fashions that have, through the course of history, attached themselves to this great feast.

Thus it is possible, and this is done by many, to go through the whole Christmas season with no deeper grasp of its meaning than that it is a time for sending and giving greetings and presents to relatives and friends, and receiving in like manner in return. It is possible through all this to get no closer to Christ than seeing His name on a

Christmas card, even a pagan Christmas card that bears the words, "A Merry Christmas."

Thus it is possible to look forward to Christmas solely as an occasion when one will take part in a family reunion. This may involve a long journey, and a festive Christmas dinner, and meeting parents, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, uncles and aunts, cousins and friends who have not been seen in a long time. This can be and is the whole of Christmas for many people.

Or the Christmas season can be looked upon mainly, if not solely, as a time for intense business activity, an opportunity to sell more goods and to make more profits than at any other time of the year. Up early for weeks before Christmas, to bed late, and in between, drive, drive, drive to make the most out of people's un-

usual eagerness to buy at this time of year.

There can even be a shallow and superficial sort of religious approach to the feast. You feel that you must go to church on Christmas. Many people go to church on that day who never otherwise see the inside of a church, except perhaps on Easter. So, it's the thing to do. It makes you feel good. It makes you feel like one of the crowd. "Going to church" describes it well. This doesn't mean getting close to Christ, or understanding Him better, or changing your life for love of Him. It merely means joining the crowd for an hour or so in a building set aside for the worship of God.

Just because it is so easy to take Christmas lightly, to be concerned only with its externals, we say that it is important for everybody to make an effort to probe into its essential and everlasting meaning. Advent is the time for such thinking; on Christmas day the thinking that has gone before should bear fruit in a complete surrender of one's life to Christ, the God-man, the Redeemer, the Life-giver, the one-day-to-be Judge of everybody who has ever been born.

The title of this reverie mentions four meanings of Christmas. In truth it would be possible to speak of a hundred meanings of Christmas. But four are singled out because each of these four is the key to many other meanings. The four are: I. The personal meaning of Christmas. II. The family meaning of Christmas. III. The parochial meaning of Christ-

mas. IV. The social meaning of Christmas.

As we reflect on these meanings, see whether they have as yet been grasped and applied in the innermost part of your soul.

I. The Personal Meaning of Christmas

BEFORE you are a social being, that is, a person with various relationships to other human beings, you are an individual, created out of nothing by God, endowed with intelligence and a free will, destined to win a personal happiness with God that will last forever.

Your first task in life is to save your own immortal soul. You are to do this by unflinching fidelity to God's will and God's laws for you, and by using the graces Christ has won for you by His birth, His life and His death, and which He makes available to you through the Mass, the sacraments and the power of prayer.

Nothing in your life ever takes precedence in importance over this primary task of saving your own soul. No duty to your family, no obligations to society, no responsibilities in business, ever relieve or excuse you from the obligation of doing what is necessary to save your own soul.

Spell this out for yourself. It means that you can never truthfully or wisely say that "you owe it to your wife, or to your children, or to your job, to commit such and such a sin." You may be tempted to speak thus. You may be tempted to steal or lie or practice contraception or

attempt abortion for the sake of your family. You will never give in to such a temptation, if you remember two things: 1) that your first duty is to God and your own conscience and your own soul, and this duty is simply phrased in the words: you must avoid as the only real evil in the world any deliberate personal offense against the law of God; 2) that you never really help, but only hurt, others in the long run by deliberate sin.

Now the first and most important lesson of Christmas is that it reminds you of the supreme importance of your own soul, and offers you the means through which you must save it.

You must think of it in this way: The Son of God comes down into the world to restore me to the friendship of God, which the whole human family had lost by reason of sin. He comes to die on a cross for me, and thus to make ample atonement for the sin through which my human forebears afflicted me, and for all my personal, actual sins as well. He comes to teach me what I must do and what I must avoid to be redeemed, saved, sanctified, glorified. He is my only hope, my only salvation. In Him I live; outside of Him I am dead to all hope and all joy.

Against the background of such thoughts, the personal meaning of Christmas comes home to me in questions like these:

Am I, or am I not, living in the grace of Christ, living in His friendship, living as He wants me to live?

If I am not, I can know it by the fact that there are unforgiven mortal sins on my soul, or sins that I refuse to give up. If I am not, Christmas is a mockery for me. It is the gift of a Saviour, of salvation, which I am rejecting, no matter how respectable or successful I appear before men.

If I am not living in the grace of Christ, is it because I am seeking happiness elsewhere than in Him? Do I think I shall find it in clinging to my secret sins of lust, or greed, or hatred, or pride? Do I forget that this little Baby Who is the heart of Christmas will one day judge and condemn me forever for every wrong thought, word and deed of which I have never repented? Do I foolishly think that the wealth or the pleasures or the independence that wrongdoing brought me will bring me any peace in that day?

If I am living in the grace of Christ, am I trying to grow in that grace? Or am I so content with what I have received from Him, so neglectful of the sacraments He gave me and the power of prayer He bestowed upon me, that I am in danger of losing His grace every day?

This is the personal meaning of Christmas. My own soul is at stake in this feast. Am I saving it or losing it by my habitual attitude toward Jesus Christ?

II. The Family Meaning of Christmas

EVERYBODY has a family. The single person has a mother and father, perhaps brothers and sisters, at least some relatives and friends.

The husband and wife have each other, and the children God has sent them or wants to send them.

Christmas is a family feast because it is the origin of all our knowledge of the duties that human beings owe to their families. This does not contradict what has been said above. Christmas is a personal feast in that it reminds each individual that his first duty is to God — his first task is to save his own immortal soul, and not even his family may be permitted to interfere with that. Thus a husband will not be excused for his mortal sins on judgment day on the score that his wife insisted on his committing sin, or drove him to sin.

But Christmas is a family feast in the sense that it brought into the world Him Who laid down the rules for the right kind of family living. To save their own individual souls husbands, wives, sons, daughters, have to keep those rules. The rules for family living are part of Christ's plan for the salvation of individuals. They are also the only protection for families on earth. Only when all Christ's important laws for family living are being kept is there reason for family gatherings and family rejoicing on Christmas.

The Christ Who was born on Christmas willed that your home and family life should always center around three eternal principles. They are: 1) the principle of permanence in marriage; 2) the principle of chastity within and outside of marriage; 3) the principle of love governing you and all the members of

your family. On Christmas, judge yourself according to these principles, as Christ will judge you eternally some day.

1) *Permanence in Marriage.*

Christ established this permanence as the only secure foundation of your home. He inspired you, by your very nature, to make it an essential part of your marriage vows, when you said to your partner: "I take you . . . till death do us part." He made fidelity to this promise a condition for your soul's salvation, as well as the only guarantee of security for your family on earth.

If you have been faithful to this vow, Christmas is the feast on which you should celebrate the permanence of your home. Gather happily with your children and your children's children. Be mindful through all your celebrating that only the will of Christ and the grace of Christ could have given permanence to your home.

And pray, while you celebrate and give thanks, for those who have broken up one home to try to create another outside of and contrary to the will of Christ. For the invalidly married, Christmas is not a feast, nor a time for celebrating. It is a rebuke, a warning, a presage of doom, at best a reminder of the awful mistake they have made, which must be corrected at any cost before they die. Pray that they will reach out and accept the grace Christ has ready to make that correction.

2) *The Principle of Chastity.*

Christ came into the world to win human beings away from all abuses

of sex, to restore chastity to its proper place in their lives as an indispensable safeguard of the sanctity and security of marriage.

He preached purity in thought, and purity in word, and purity in action. All this centered around the principle that God created the powers of sex to be used only in the state of marriage and decreed that even in marriage their first purpose—His purpose—never be interfered with.

Christmas, therefore, is the feast of chastity. Of chastity for the married, who are grateful for the abundant privileges God has given them, but never rebellious against the limitations Christ places on their use. Of chastity for the single, who in the midst of a corrupt world use the all-powerful grace won by Christ to resist every temptation offered them from without and arising from within their own fallen nature.

Thank God, then, on Christmas, whether you are married or single, for the clear guidance Christ and His Church give you in matters of purity.

Thank God, then, on Christmas, for giving you His Son, Who became your Redeemer by dying on a cross, and thereby earned for you all the means through which you can, if you will, remain pure.

Thank the Infant Saviour on His birthday, for making His whole life and His bitter death your answer to those people in the world who, in the words of St. Paul, knew God but glorified Him not as God, and are

therefore delivered up to a corrupt sense so that they abuse their own bodies among themselves.

3) *The Principle of Love.* Families are built on love. In them the best and noblest and most rewarding forms of love find expression. This love is not necessarily, and cannot always be, a love of feeling, a love that invariably satisfies the selfish instincts of the one who loves.

It is rather a love rooted in the free will, directed by the will and the love of God, always seeking the happiness, on earth and in heaven, of the ones beloved. It is therefore a love that often demands sacrifice forgiveness, self-immolation, the suppression of one's own feelings and desires.

Christ came into the world to teach families this kind of love. His family was the whole human race, and He laid down His life out of love for every single member of that family.

Ask yourself, then, during Advent and at Christmas time, whether you have the kind of love for your family Christ came to teach and make possible.

Have you learned Christ's spirit of forgiveness, so that you take part in no family feuds, bear hatred to no one in your relationship, give way to no grudges or grievances, and never try to hurt any member of your family in revenge for some hurt he has caused you?

Have you learned Christ's spirit of patience, so that you can smother in silence the flare-ups of your tem-

per against husband or wife or son or daughter or brother or sister?

Have you learned Christ's spirit of unselfishness, so that your whole aim in life has become, in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, "not so much to be served as to serve" those whom you love?

Christmas is the feast of family love. It is not your feast if you do not examine yourself for faults and sins against that love.

III. The Parochial Meaning of Christmas

THERE is no such thing as a true Christian without a parish. Even the constant traveler has a parish in the place where he temporarily stays for any length of time. Most people are permanently attached to a particular parish by the very fact of their residence within its boundaries.

The parish church is every soul's immediate source of contact with the graces won for it by Christ. There it receives the sacrament of baptism, and cleansing from original sin. There, ordinarily, it can be nourished daily on the everlasting bread of Holy Communion. There it hears the word of God, constantly warning it against the wily words of the world. There it finds ample opportunity for the purging of its sins in sacramental confession and for growth in perfection. There it has a pastor, a spiritual father, who, no matter what his human faults, has dedicated his life to its spiritual needs.

Thus Christ comes down through the centuries and across the world

and into the heart of an individual through the parish that in miniature represents His Church as a whole.

Therefore the members of a parish, whether it be large or small, whether its buildings be humble and inexpensive or magnificent and costly, should be devoted to their parish as the means through which Christ comes personally to them. And they should be devoted to one another and to their pastors by the same bond of love that unites the members of a family together.

Christmas is a parochial feast because it should bring these thoughts to mind. Each parish church has its own crib, in which the birth of the Saviour is represented anew. Each has its own Christmas Masses, during which the people of the parish receive the Saviour into their hearts and offer up His sacrifice on the cross anew.

Ask yourself, as you prepare for Christmas, whether you have cultivated the kind of love for your parish that God wants you to have.

Are you ashamed of your parish, of its smallness and simplicity, and therefore in the habit of attending more glamorous parishes, where you will be surrounded by people of a higher social standing than your own people?

Do you permit the human frailties of your pastor to blind you to your duties, to your own parish, and cause you to do harm by scandalous criticizing and tale-bearing among other parishioners?

Are you doing your part in supporting your parish? Or do you

leave most of that to others, contributing far less than average parishioners in the same circumstances as yourself?

All the benefits of Christmas come to you through your parish. Ask yourself on Christmas how much you do for your parish in return.

IV. The Social Meaning of Christmas

CHRISTMAS has a meaning for the whole of society in which you live. By coming down into the world the Son of God established the rules according to which men can live at peace with one another, in their business relationships, their civic relationships, their neighborhood relationships, and, indeed, in their relationships to all peoples and nations and races of the world.

These rules are not only a part of the code according to which individuals must save their own immortal souls; they are also the only foundation on which temporal prosperity and peace can be built in this world. When the angels sang, at the birth of Christ, "peace on earth to men of good will," they meant that peace would be found only by human beings who would accept and apply the principles Christ would offer to govern their relationships with one another.

Consider three of these principles, and ask yourself whether you have a right to celebrate Christmas on the ground that each one of them has been made a part of your character, the basis for habits of conduct toward your fellow men.

1) *The Principle of Justice.* This takes many forms. It takes the form of absolute honesty in all business dealings, of truthfulness in speech, of integrity in keeping promises, living up to contracts, fulfilling your given word. Can you truly say, on the birthday of Christ, that His principles of justice are yours?

2) *The Principle of Charity.* This again means many things. It means compassion and almsgiving for the underprivileged and the suffering, first, in one's own community, but in spirit and sometimes in action extending to suffering humanity anywhere in the world.

It means resisting every inclination to prejudice against other human beings, whether on the basis of nationality or race or color or religion or social standing or education.

It means forgiveness of enemies, no matter how deep the wounds or how lasting the injuries they may have inflicted.

It is the lack of such charity that breeds Communism and strife, hatred and quarrelling, civil and international war.

Can you truly say on the birthday of Christ that you have adopted His charity as the guiding rule for your whole life?

3) *The Principle of Zeal.* If you know Christ and love Him, and see in His teaching your only hope of happiness in heaven and of peace on earth, there is still something lacking to you, if you do not possess the strong and effective desire to make Him fully known to others. Christ came into the world to save all men,

not merely a select few, and to save all through the same faith, the same law, the same grace and the same Church. He wants those who come to know Him to do everything in their power to make Him known to others.

Christmas is therefore the feast of zeal. It is the feast on which you should ask yourself these questions:

Is my example such that it will inspire others to want to know Christ as I know Him? Or can others say about my way of living, "If that is what it means to be a Christian and a Catholic, I am not interested?"

Do I try to know my faith, through reading and study, well enough to be able to answer questions and correct errors expressed by those who know little about Christ and His true Church?

Do I pray for those outside the one true fold of Christ, realizing that through prayer I can win the grace of salvation for many such?

Do I help missionaries who go to abandoned parts of the world to make Christ known to those who walk in darkness and in error?

All the above can be summed up in one line: Christmas is the time for examining one's conscience as to how much right one has to celebrate the birth of the Saviour. If the right has been renounced, through the rejection of any of the requirements for salvation set forth by Christ, it can be regained by full surrender to Christ on Christmas. Only such total surrender makes "men of good will," to whom peace on earth is promised and eternal life with God in heaven.

SIMPLE SOLUTION

A young housewife got fed up with the voluminous correspondence in which she invariably found herself involved when a mail-ordered item was found to be unsatisfactory.

What, she pondered, happens to the woman who hasn't a college degree and how on earth does she fill out those blanks and answer those questions?

She decided that she would find out the next time a suitable occasion arose. So when her iron went bad, she took the tag that had come on it and, across the back, printed crudely, "My Iron She No get hot."

Promptly, she received a new iron and no blank to fill out from the service department of the mail order house.

Quote

MODERATION AND PRUDENCE

Prudence and vigilant care are especially demanded of those who use television. Due moderation in its use, prudence in allowing children to watch it according to their different ages, a balanced judgment based on what has been seen before, and finally exclusion of children from what are in any sense improper spectacles: all these are duties which weigh heavily on parents and on all engaged in education.

The Pope Speaks

Code of Catholic Conduct

Music in God's House

LOUIS G. MILLER, C.S.S.R.

A CORRESPONDENT gives us a good point for reflection in this particular column. She writes:

"Being organist and choir director in our parish of 2000 souls for 14 years, I have seen a tremendous change. Not too many years ago people were eager and proud to sing in the choir. Now it seems to me the opposite is true. They all want good singing and are glad when on great feast days a good choir makes things more festive. But (except for a few) they will do nothing to make this possible. It is a constant struggle to keep up our choir membership. When the younger choir members get married, they immediately drop out, and yet these are exactly the maturing voices we need. I often wonder what others are doing to maintain their choirs. I don't know what can be done. Do you have any suggestions?"

We have heard the same complaint from choir directors in various parts of the country. Why is the parish choir at such a low ebb? There are many reasons people can give for non-participation, no doubt, and some of them are quite valid. Most people are busy, and they have many responsibilities.

Yet, when all due allowance is made for valid reasons, we are convinced that a good part of the reason for such lack of interest and effort is to be found in the ugly word *selfishness*. Of those who have the talent and the time to sing (if they really wanted to), only too many are lacking in the spirit of unselfish sacrifice. Creature comforts (to use an old-fashioned

term) make them indisposed to the effort of regular choir practice. The choir has too much competition in the way of other interests and pleasures, and many people, it would seem, fail to put these things in the right perspective and order of importance.

To put it bluntly, and at the risk of offending, we are inclined to think that anemia in the average parish choir and the shying away of the average Catholic even from attendance at the parish high Mass (because it takes a few minutes longer) are a symptom of flabbiness in the faith.

What is the remedy? A stronger and more vigorous faith, surely, which will recognize that singing, appropriately done, is a very important part of the liturgy of the Church. Those who sing the Mass derive a special benefit from the Mass which is reserved to them alone for their special type of participation. As St. Augustine wrote long ago, "He who sings, prays twice." What he meant was that such a one, by his effort and sacrifice, adds something distinctive to the prayer, which he might otherwise have said quietly and by himself.

We can only urge upon those of our readers who are qualified for choir work that they try to cultivate that kind of faith, and that they rally to the cause. With their choir directors, according to the wise norms of the Church on sacred music, let them present that fitting and reverent vocal accompaniment to the divine liturgy which the Church so ardently desires.

Christmas Gifts

Adapted from a
Catholic Hour radio address by
Joseph E. Manton, C.S.S.R.

for

the

Family

EVER since the Holy Family was gathered in the stable on that bleakest and brightest of all Christmas days, Christmas has been essentially a family feast. New Year's may be for visiting; but behind the soft curtains and around the cheery fireside, America loves to spend Christmas at home. By this time almost all the world has contributed to making this family celebration the warm and picturesque event that it is. We transplanted the gay and glittering Christmas tree from Germany. We borrowed the stockings hung over the fireplace from France. Ireland lit the Christmas candles in our windows. England piled the Christmas cards in the postman's bag. The angels over Judea gave us the Christmas carols; and the tiny crib with its colorful statuettes we owe to Italy and St. Francis.

In some parts of the world, like the Virgin Islands and Brazil, Christmas is a bang-bang affair with the accent on fireworks. They welcome

Christ at Christmas the way we welcome the Fourth of July. I still think that a flaming poinsettia has it all over a fiery pinwheel. In fact I think that the very best welcome we could give the newborn King might be to abolish altogether *fireworks in the family*. And we could begin that welcome right now and without any fear of rushing the season, because this welcome, this preparation for Christmas is fundamentally an interior preparation of the soul.

By family fireworks I mean episodes like this. Somebody mislays

Dad's battered slippers or his odorous pipe or his evening paper, and zoom! He goes up in the air like a skyrocket, exploding in a burst of wrath that fairly drips fire. Christmas may be coming but it is no longer Silent Night. Or, a couple of sisters along the sidelines who feel that "Peace on earth to men of good will" does not include women, begin to bicker and quarrel, and this word leads to that, till the whole thing sounds like the spit-spat of a couple of fire-crackers. By way of background *obbligato* some families have among them a voice that never would be mistaken for one of the herald angels. It is a dusty, discontented voice, and in the way of fireworks resembles most one of those firecrackers that has been broken in the middle like a cigarette, and therefore doesn't go off with an honest little bang but just hisses out. Just so, this big brother doesn't explode. He merely sits there hissing through his teeth, and grumbling, "Have we got that for supper again?"

Similarly, in these pre-Christmas days you would think that anything like the bark of small firearms is hardly the proper welcome for the Prince of Peace. Yet you will find in some homes individuals whose temper works on a hair-trigger mechanism. These are the touchy people. A mere touch — the least fancied offense — and they go off, and the air all around them is blue — and not just smoke either. Of course they will tell you that you must understand them; they really don't mean anything by it. Well, maybe it is on-

ly a blank cartridge, but just the same the sudden sharp blast makes everybody nervous if not actually scared. The trouble with these touchy unpredictable people is that they have to be labelled like medicine bottles — with directions just how they are to be taken. They are like landing fields; you have to have a weather report before you go in.

Other homes are not content with Christmas candles; they also have Roman candles. These are the naggers; and a nagger is a person who gives a new meaning to the old adage, "There's no place like home!" because when she is on the job there certainly isn't. In the arsenal of family fireworks, the nagger is the Roman candle because complaints and abuse pour out of her in spurt after spurt of hot flame. And when at last you think it is all over—your mistake! It isn't. Somehow there always seems to be one or more shot left in the Roman candle, and there is one more last word in the nagger.

Then there are families which, left to themselves, might give the newborn Christ the perfect welcome of a happy and harmonious fireside. *If left to themselves* — but that is leaving out the in-laws (maybe we should call them outlaws). Sometimes a husband or a wife will have a set of little hidden grievances lined up like a string of firecrackers. But nothing much happens until some meddling in-law comes along and plays the punk. Please do not think I am descending to slang. I am staying very technical, even pyrotechnical if you will. But this rash in-

truding in-law is very like a piece of punk in that she is all burned up about somebody else's business, proceeds to ignite husband against wife or wife against husband, and then when the snap and crackle of the battle is on, she withdraws, glowing with delight at the fireworks she has started.

Other families, if the Christ-child chose to come to them at Christmastime, would welcome Him with a silent night that was not at all a holy night. This situation is very much like a big jumbo firecracker that doesn't go off. You know it has been lit; you fear the fuse is smouldering; but nothing happens. Yet the very silence is dangerous; you are afraid to go too near because it may explode in your face. In a family, this is the ominous silence of hate. It could be two brothers or two sisters who refuse to speak. But over the whole house hangs that strained silence, that secretly burning bitterness. This is the worst of all; and who doubts that to this the little Christ, were He to hand out His gifts according to deserts, would prefer His stable, and the company of the gentle beasts and the warmhearted shepherds?

Well, what is the answer to these un-Christmaslike backgrounds for the Christmas feast? The best answer might be a question. Am I one of these skyrockets that go up in the air in flaming anger, or one of these touchy little cap-pistols, or an endless Roman candle nagger who would fight an echo for the last word? Am I?

There is nothing like a little humility to make a big change in a home. If the stable of Bethlehem was a cave, I suppose the shepherds had to stoop in order to get in. Any one who wants to come close to Christ has to stoop a little. The proud, whose noses are elevated like an anti-aircraft gun, cannot see their own faults. They cannot see the entrance to the cave either. They stay outside.

Besides, the Holy Family in Bethlehem's bleak stable was a family, not just three individuals under the same roof. And a family — any family — is no place for independence, but rather for interdependence. Its feast is not the Fourth of July, but Christmas. A family is no place for these people who are always asserting their rights. "I want my rights! That's all I ask — justice!" You do? Well, just how far do you want justice? All the way up? Up to the throne of God? I think most of us would settle for a little mercy there.

The family is no place for a dictator who is all temper; not for a prima-donna who is all temperament. After all, the only display of fireworks over the stable was a star. A star that helped bring others nearer to our Lord.

On greeting cards they usually paint the Christmas star as a tiny golden burst of flashing rays, so that at first glance you might mistake it for a Fourth of July sparkler. And that should be the pattern for family fireworks. There will of course always be some domestic misunder-

standings, some minor clashes. Where people live so closely side by side, there is bound to be occasional jostling, bumping, stepping on sensitive toes, and occasionally a head-on collision. But if these family tiffs must be, let them be like the Fourth of July sparkler; a little heat, a tiny flare-up, a few sparks, and it is soon over and no harm done.

THE point I am trying to make in all this is, that as Christ stands on the threshold of your home ready to come in for Christmas, it is much more important to do your part in the preparation of the family rather than in the mere decoration of the home. Hang your heart with holly, not merely the house. Kind words in the family are better than Christmas candles in the window, which after all give most of their cheer to passers-by. Emptying a narrow soul of petty spites and jealousies is much more in the true Christmas spirit than filling a conventional stocking. The family tree comes before the Christmas tree; and if some of the branches are a bit snarled and tangled, this is the season to straighten them out. Family feuds have spoiled more Christmas dinners than the choicest of foods ever made.

Some people may think that in these pre-Christmas musings I have read you the Gospel of Christmas according to Charles Dickens rather than according to Jesus Christ. But this is the Gospel of Christ. I grant it is not the lofty — and vague — spirituality of the stratosphere. It is more the homespun spirituality of the sidewalk and the stairs and the

living-room. It emphasizes the little things that hurt our little Lord — like the pricking of the straws, not the piercing of the nails. It concentrates on the home because charity begins at home. And charity in that sense never meant a dime clanked into a beggar's cup nor a philanthropic check flourished off for some fund. That word charity originally meant in English — as it still does in Latin — love. It can of course, and should express itself in gifts, particularly in the approaching joyous season. But some Christmas gifts are only an external formality, very much like the popcorn and the peppermint canes hung on the Christmas tree. The best gifts are those of the heart.

Therefore these days when we are smuggling our mysterious bundles into secret hiding places, we should remember that while a year's supply of scented soap may be a very welcome gift, a year's supply of consideration, thoughtfulness, tenderness, charity will be more welcome still. A year's subscription to this magazine or that may be ideal, but a year's subscription to life as lived by a kindly, considerate loving member of the family would be appreciated even more.

It is all for the sake of the Little Stranger in the manger. It is a new kind of Christmas welcome—a true one. Because between the inner peace of your conscience washed sweet and clean, and the outer peace of love for those around you, the true spirit of Christmas swings and rings like a merry bell.

The

Christ-child's

LOUIS G. MILLER, C.S.S.R.

WHEN Christ was born in Bethlehem, the first to greet Him as He lay on the straw of the manger, with Mary and Joseph kneeling close by, were the shepherds. And the shepherds were followed in due course by the wise men or kings from the East.

This is something, of course, that is known to every Christian. But there is a significance about this double visit that is perhaps not so well known or sufficiently thought upon.

The first to visit Christ were the poor, and some of them were young, and some were old. They lived a hard life, these shepherds in the time of Christ. In the cold of winter and the heat of summer they were exposed to the elements. Their children knew what it was to spend the chill nights huddled beside a fire on a hillside, without whimpering, realizing from early years that this was part of their nomad existence. How often they looked up at the clear, cold stars deep in a winter's night and saw in their conjunction the

Neighbors

The rich and the poor,
youth and childhood and
old age—all find their place
in the Christmas story.

bear and the scorpion and those other figures which ancient astronomers had drawn from their fancy.

And after them came the wise men. Mature and seasoned with life's varied experience were these visitors to the crib, yet with sufficient humility to bow down and adore. They also had suffered in their long journey across the desert to Jerusalem. They had been suspicious of Herod's crafty smile. They were glad enough to heed the angel's warning and go back to their homes by another way, so that the Christ-child might be saved from Herod's wrath.

Here are significant features about these visits. The young and the old; the poor and the rich; those of lowly calling and those of high station came to adore Christ. But in one way or another all of them had to suffer for the privilege. The road to Bethlehem for all was a path of sacrifice. In the midst of suffering and sacrifice Christ was born and those who were unwilling to follow that road were unable to find their way to Bethlehem at all.

FROM another point of view, there are other friends and neighbors of Christ whose lives are cast in the same mold of sacrifice. They are friends whose feast-days are next to His birthday. Surely Providence had a part in giving the Infant Christ these neighbors in the Christian calendar: St. Stephen on December 26, St. John the Apostle on December 27, and the Holy Innocents on December 28. Here you have youth, old age, and childhood; the lowly and the highly placed, paying their homage through the centuries to the newborn Saviour.

St. Stephen was the first martyr of the new Church, the first to shed his blood freely for Christ. Surely then he deserves a place of honor next to the Saviour Who shed His blood for the world.

Anyone who has read the *Acts of the Apostles*, which in the New Testament immediately follows the Gospel of St. John, will remember St. Stephen and his heroism. He was one of the seven deacons named by the apostles to take care of temporalities in the early Christian com-

munity, and also, of course, to preach and spread the Gospel. Stephen was a forthright, one might say a blunt, young man, and he withstood the Jewish enemies of Christ to their face.

Thereupon, "they stirred up the people and the elders and the Scribes, and running together, they seized him and brought him to the Sanhedrin." There, with the help of false witnesses, they effected his condemnation as a blasphemer. Stephen then proceeded to give a fighting speech to his accusers, an address not calculated to win their good will.

"Stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear," he cried out to them, "you always oppose the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so you do also." Hearing themselves described as "betrayers and murderers of the just One," was too much for his judges to bear. St. Luke, author of the *Acts*, describes graphically how "they were cut to the heart and gnashed their teeth at him . . . and cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed upon him all together. And they cast him out of the city and stoned him."

St. Stephen forgave and prayed for his murderers even as the stones pelted upon him and crushed his bones. This happened only a few years after the death of Christ, and there must have been a great welcome in heaven for this brave young man who died so courageously for the cause of his Master.

Next, on December 27th, we come to old age; to St. John the Apostle,

who lived to be 94 years old, and died in the year 100. This "disciple whom Jesus loved" had his own fiery moments. He once, with his brother James, wanted to call down avenging fire on an inhospitable Samaritan town, for which Christ gently reproved him. Perhaps it was because of the violent temperament these two brothers shared that Christ called them "sons of thunder."

John was close to Christ in all the great events recorded in the Gospels; he alone of the apostles stood beneath the cross when Christ died, and was given Mary to care for as his mother. His Gospel is full of wonderful and profound recollections of Christ, manifesting to the people His mission here on earth.

There is a strong tradition that St. John in his old age was made to suffer the torments of a martyr, his life being saved only by the miraculous intervention of God. It came about in this way. In the year 94 John was arrested in the city of Ephesus, where he was bishop, and sent as a prisoner to Rome. There he was made to stand trial before the emperor Domitian, who then was relentlessly persecuting the Christians.

Despite his great age and gentle bearing, John was condemned to be scourged and then thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil. From this dreadful bath, however, John emerged safe and unhurt, to the amazement of his guards and the onlookers. Domitian himself, being superstitiously terrified, banished John to the lonely and tiny island of

Patmos off the coast of Greece in the Aegean Sea.

There, as his life drew to a close, John wrote the mysterious and mystical last book of the New Testament called the *Apocalypse*. There at last he died and went to heaven to be with Christ Whom he had loved and served so faithfully during life.

YOUTH and old age have rendered their homage to Christ on the two days after Christmas; now, on December 28, it is the turn of children. But these are not laughing, happy children; these are little ones covered with blood and crying for their mothers as the soldiers slash with their sharp and heavy swords.

These are the babies of Bethlehem, of whom St. Matthew relates the sad account:

"Then Herod, seeing that he had been tricked by the Magi, was exceedingly angry; and he sent and slew all the boys in Bethlehem and all its neighborhood who were two years old or under. . . Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremias the prophet, 'A voice was heard in Rama, weeping and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be comforted, because they are no more.'"

Bethlehem was a small village, and there were perhaps not more than 15 or 20 of these tiny victims of cruel Herod's wrath, but even one would have been too many. What kind of strange homage is this, one might ask, that must be rendered to the newborn king in the slaughter of small children and the weeping of bereaved mothers?

The answer to this question goes to the very heart of things. God of course did not will the cruelty of Herod. Christ (Who knew all things, even as an infant) did not rejoice over what had happened to these other children; perhaps He shed tears over it as His mother and St. Joseph hurried Him away from Herod and into the exile of Egypt.

But God had made King Herod free to do good or evil, as He makes all men free. He will not take away that freedom because it is abused. To be free is one of God's greatest gifts to man. He who does wrong, as Herod did, must answer for that wrong. Meanwhile those who suffer

from wrongdoing, if they suffer willingly for the sake of Christ, gain glory and merit and eternal rest in heaven. It is not easy for anyone to come to terms with the cross. Perhaps it were best to say simply: there must be a tremendous meaning and purpose in the cross; otherwise God would not have taken it upon His shoulders to redeem the world.

This lesson must be learned: to be a neighbor of Christ is to suffer. To be a good neighbor and a friend, is to suffer patiently, as He did. Into the hearts of such good neighbors the Christ-child comes with the joy and peace which only He can bring.

LAND OF PLENTY

Yes, the United States is in bad shape — worse off than any other country in the world — in some respects. No other country is suffering political and economic troubles because of a surplus of food. No other country has traffic congestion because so many people own automobiles.

In no other other country does everyone make so much money. In no other country do people take so many holidays and work so few hours, so they will have time to spend the money that keeps piling up on them. In no other country is obesity, caused by plenty of everything and high living, one of the chief medical problems. Yes, it is a sad situation!

Pikes Peaker

NO JOKE

There is no such thing as a "good-luck" prayer or a "never-fail" novena. To participate in an activity of this kind is both foolish and offensive to the faith. It is especially bad to see Catholic names appended to the list of those who are furthering the project for it is a very poor example and gives aid, comfort and ammunition to those who criticize what they wrongly call Catholic superstitious practices.

The best luck we can have is to be presented by God with the opportunity to sacrifice for love of Him. When one's faith is so watered down that he expects great material blessings to result from chain letters and the copying of "never-fail" prayers, it is time for a serious spiritual check-up. And this is no joke!

St. Louis Register



Problems of Single People



Thoughtlessness of Married Brothers and Sisters

Donald F. Miller, C.S.S.R.

PROBLEM: I am single, and have chosen to stay at home and take care of my mother and father, who are 83 and 85 and suffer from many of the ills and ailments that go with old age. I have six married brothers and sisters, who have their own families, and their own absorbing interests. Could not something be said in your column for single people about the wrong attitudes that such married brothers and sisters often take both toward the single member of the family who has sacrificed her life for her parents, and toward the parents themselves? To us they seem so thoughtless of how much a little visit with their aged parents now and then means to the latter, and so unappreciative of the difficult task that is ours in caring for them. I know that this is not a unique problem, but one that arises in many situations like mine. Tell us how to cope with it.

SOLUTION: We must begin our answer to this problem with a warning against the thought, which sometimes comes to single people in the situation described, that the sole source of relief for their difficulty is to be looked for in the correction of the faults of others. This warning is necessary for people in all walks of life. An unhappy wife thinks that her peace of mind depends absolutely and solely on the correction of the faults of her husband. A miserable husband blames all his woes on his wife. Sometimes even a discontented religious believes that it

is his (or her) fellow religious or superiors who are responsible for all his misery.

The truth is that peace of mind can be found even in the midst of suffering from the faults of others. Many saints were vigorously persecuted by others; but this never disturbed the tranquility that resulted from their love of God and complete subjection to His will.

The charity of a single woman who has dedicated her whole life to caring for aged parents is a magnificent thing to behold. It is exceptionally pleasing to God, as many proverbs of the Old Testament affirm. The great danger is that it may become spoiled by a tinge of self-pity, or by demands for human recognition and rewards that lessen the supernatural merit it can win.

To avert self-pity, the single girl who has chosen to give her life to caring for her parents must be prepared for feelings of grievance against her married brothers and sisters. The feelings will often be reactions to real faults of such brothers and sisters, and faults that cannot be easily corrected. But there is no place in life where the faults of others do not irritate, and unless one can bear with these even as Christ bore with all our sins in dying for them on the cross, peace will never be found.

Perhaps, however, this is the place for a few comments on some of the wrong attitudes that married sons and daugh-

ters take toward aging parents, and the single sister who cares for them.

There is, first of all, their tendency to neglect their parents. In many cases the neglect is gross. Though they live not too far away, they seldom stop in to see their parents. They never make any effort to lighten the burden of the one member of the family who, in caring for their parents, is doing the job that should in some measure be shared by all.

On top of that neglect, there is often, in a time of crisis, interference with the course pursued by the daughter who has stayed at home all through the years. For example, an aged mother, who is being cared for by a self-sacrificing daughter, becomes critically ill. Often when this happens, a married son or daughter, who has seen little of the mother for months, will rush into the home and start throwing out orders as if he (or she) were complete boss of the situation. "You've got to get Dr. So-and-So. . . . You've got to take mother to a hospital. . . . You've got to keep mother from going to a hospital. Etc., etc." No one could blame the single daughter for feeling great irritation at such conduct, because it is absolutely uncalled for. Whatever married sons and daughters want to recommend should be taken up with the daughter who has

borne the day-to-day task of caring for her mother and left to her judgment. Giving her peremptory orders is not the right of those who appear on the scene only when a crisis arises.

Then there is the tendency of married sons and daughters to blame the single member of the family for what she does or does not do for the parents to whom she has given her life. We recall one typical case of this. A single girl had taken care of her aging father, whose mind was slipping, for years. Finally, with the advice of the very best spiritual and medical authorities, she found herself forced to make the decision to have her father given psychiatric treatment in an institution. The rest of the family, all married sons and daughters, who never for a single day had had to watch over the mentally slipping parent, descended on the girl like prosecuting attorneys, accusing her of ingratitude, cruelty, selfishness and all sorts of evil motives. Such conduct can only be roundly condemned.

Yet, while human nature remains what it is, single persons who devote their lives to their parents must be prepared for these and other sources of irritation. They enhance the sacrifice that has been made. They multiply the merits being earned.

TRIBUTE

Originally from the tenements of the East Side of New York, there appeared upon the scene at the University of Pittsburgh, the son of a Jewish garment-pressing father and a Jewish seamstress mother, who was ordained to become the conqueror of the most evil scourge afflicting mankind, poliomyelitis, Dr. Jonas E. Salk.

It was not easy for him to work his way through medical college, but he made it. He set his mind and his heart upon the seemingly impossible task of developing a serum which would make the deadly polio virus impotent. The world now knows the glorious news, and the world pays tribute to Dr. Salk, the young Jewish-American scientist who gave his discovery to the suffering world without any intention of ever realizing a single penny of personal profit.

The Butcher Workman.

? ? ? Readers Ask... ? ? ?

Overpopulation?

Louis G. Miller, C.S.S.R.

QUITE regularly these days articles appear in the popular journals on the subject of overpopulation. According to these writers, we are in grave danger of multiplying ourselves to the extent where literally we eat ourselves out of house and home. Before the century is out, this country's population will have increased from the current 173 million to 300 million. How will all these people be fed, particularly when the additional fact is realized that hundreds of thousands of acres of farm land are lost each year to erosion or to the march of industry with its far-flung factories? And taking the world as a whole, with population increasing at a fantastic rate, will the earth be able to produce enough to sustain its inhabitants in the year 2000?

These are real questions which are on peoples' minds, and there is no use in trying to dodge or deny them. The problem does exist. Recently the *Readers Digest* carried an article under the heading: "*Will We Be Able To Feed Our Skyrocketing Population?*" What answer should a Catholic give to that question?

First of all, it should be pointed out that, merely from the standpoint of available physical resources, the situation is not as hopeless as some so-called experts would have us believe. Dr. Firmin Bear, distinguished soil scientist from Rutgers University, states flatly: "I have no fears about our capacity to feed our population." Dr. Herrell De Graff, food economist of Cor-

nell University, adds: "We have the same amount of cropland as 35 years ago, and 62,000,000 more people, yet we eat better today because food output per acre is up 70 percent." And these experts are convinced we are far from having reached the limit of productivity in our physical resources.

What has been said pertains to this country. It cannot be denied that in other countries, such as India and China, the amount of food being currently produced is not sufficient for the needs of the existing population. It is no exaggeration to say that half of the world's population goes to bed hungry each night. The population of these countries also is skyrocketing. How much greater the problem will be 50 years from now!

Again, even on the level of potential agricultural resources, if these were sufficiently utilized; if modern techniques and aids to farming were sufficiently widespread, enough food could be raised for all. The rice yield of India, for all its tremendous size, is only one-third that of tiny Japan. Suppose India were farmed as Japan is; its granaries would be overflowing with rice.

Along with this, there is the matter of better distribution of the world's food, a solution which is scarcely even mentioned in high places. Yet is it not a basic fact that nations as well as individuals are bound by the law of charity? To give a starving man a slice of bread, if you have

a whole loaf for yourself, is elemental humanity. Does not a nation with overabundance of food have some obligation to the nation which is literally starving?

But let us look far ahead to the time when the population of the world could conceivably increase beyond the capacity of the earth to support it. The only answer given by those who do not recognize God or His law would be that people must stop having children, and they must do this by the practice of contraception. There are not wanting those who contend that this solution to the world's ills must be put into effect on a wide scale even here and now.

For the Catholic, such a solution is an evil thing. Those who argue thus are blind to the fact that the fate of the world is in the hands of divine providence. God made the world; He knows well the earth's potential for food; He knows well how far the human race must increase before its appointed task on this globe is done. He desires man to use all possible means to draw food from the earth — for the sustenance of all, without selfish restrictions. For the rest — God's providence may be

relied upon to care for the human race which He created.

VERY apt were the words of Pope Pius XII, in a recent address to the Directors for Associations of Large Families:

"The so-called problem of overpopulation of the earth is partly real and partly unreasonably feared as an imminent catastrophe for modern society; but undoubtedly the rise of this problem and the continued failure to arrive at a solution of it is not due to some mixup or inertia on the part of divine providence, but rather to disorder on man's part — especially to his selfishness and avarice.

"With the progress that has been made in technology, with the ease of transportation, and with the new sources of energy that are just beginning to be tapped, the earth can promise prosperity to all those who will dwell on it for a long time to come.

"God is not going to ask for an accounting of the general destiny of mankind; that is His business; but He will demand an accounting of the single acts that they have deliberately performed in accordance with or against the dictates of conscience."

MOTHER'S WATCHING!

When St. Jean-Baptist Vianney was a boy, he was obliged to perform hard work in the fields. The first time he had to help dig in the vineyard, we are told, he came home almost completely exhausted. Then he invented an excellent means which made all work easy.

Before he began to work next morning, he placed a statue of the Blessed Virgin not far from his place of labor. From time to time he looked at it to draw new courage. And under the eyes of the virgin mother his work progressed rapidly.

When he reached the place where the statue stood, he moved it a few paces ahead and continued his work, while his eyes often turned to the image of Mary. He kept this up until evening. That day he worked faster and accomplished more than his elder brother.

Taught by this experience, it became for Jean Vianney an inseparable habit to work under the eyes of his heavenly mother, and it proved that he could do much more work.

Marist Brothers Bulletin

*A personal appeal, intended
only for those who find a
description of themselves
in these lines!*

JAMES BARRY, C.S.S.R.

PERHAPS on reading the above title you felt the tug of a tiny question in your mind, saying: "Does that mean me?" Whether it does or not can be settled quickly. A classical definition of an indifferent Catholic is "one who has the faith but too few good works." Of course there are degrees of indifference, but it can be said that no one should resent being called indifferent if some or all of the following characteristics are evident in his day-to-day living.

The indifferent Catholic is one who has but little interest in receiving the sacraments of confession and Communion. He may do the bare minimum that is commanded, that is, receive the sacraments once a year. Or he may even average three or four times a year. Beyond that he is not interested in the sacraments, or he is so much more interested in other things that the thought of receiving the sacraments scarcely ever enters his mind. He would probably agree that he should go to Communion more often, that this is the desire of Christ, the will of the Church, and the first means designed for making men good Christians, but if

What Is an Indifferent Catholic?

you ask him why he receives only once or twice a year, he will answer something like this: "I'm too busy," or "I forget about it," or "I just get careless." By every excuse he offers he convicts himself of being an indifferent Catholic.

CARELESS ABOUT PRAYER

THE indifferent Catholic is also very irregular and careless about prayer. More often than not he forgets or deliberately neglects to say any morning or evening pray-

er. He has long since dropped the habit of praying before and after meals. He faces many temptations in his daily routine, through thought and desire and suggestion, but they never remind him of the need and value of even a small prayer. When he does pray, it is more or less in a perfunctory manner. He says words, but he has scarcely any consciousness of their meaning. His mind cannot tear itself away from his business, family, friends, amusements, etc. Again, he would probably agree with the statement that no man can live a truly Catholic life without prayer, but for himself, he would quickly add, he forgets, gets careless, doesn't think about it. Indifferent is the word for him.

NOT BOTHERED ABOUT SINS

THE indifferent Catholic is without very deep convictions about the meaning of sin, or at least he does not let himself be bothered very much either by an occasional fall into serious sin or by his remaining in the state of serious sin for months on end. Thus, when he makes his annual or semiannual confession he usually finds that he has been walking around as a dead man, spiritually speaking, for several months. Perhaps he became deliberately drunk quite soon after his last confession. Perhaps he fell into several sins of impurity, or even habitually committed such. He may have missed Mass on Sunday a few times after late Saturday night carousings. The fact that any one of these sins could have plunged him into hell did not bother him at the time; nor did it disturb him that for

weeks and months he walked on the edge of the precipice. He was indifferent to the most important issue in human life, namely, whether he was in friendship or at enmity with God.

On top of all this, the indifferent Catholic is without any incentive of zeal, either for the bettering of his own life or for the making of the true faith a more vital and effective leaven in society. He is content with his own worldliness, disloyalty, and hypocrisy. He recognizes no obligation of good example, influence, and leadership as part of the responsibility of every Catholic toward the world in which he lives. He gives a bad impression of Catholics to all who know him — but he doesn't care.

There, then, is a description of the indifferent Catholic according to which you may answer the nudging question. "Does that mean me?" It requires, usually, an extraordinary grace of God for an indifferent Catholic to shake off his torpor.

Know then, if you are indifferent according to the above description, that indifference is contrary to the essential spirit of the Christian religion which you profess to follow. The spirit of the true Christian is one of intense gratitude for the redemption and elevation of human nature effected by Christ; of strong, personal, constantly expressed love of Christ; of great fear of being disloyal to Christ, and of eagerness to help others, both to know Christ and to live in union with Him. All such qualities are lacking in the indifferent person.

WHAT CHANCE OF SALVATION?

INDIFFERENCE is contrary to a human being's own highest interests in life. For a Catholic, which means one to whom the gift of faith has been given, the first and most important interest must be the saving of his soul. Indifference as described above is the abandonment of all concern in that regard. Indeed, the chances of salvation for an indifferent Catholic are exceedingly low. On tallying his score at each of his infrequent confessions he finds that during five out of six preceding months, or eleven out of the preceding twelve, he has been God's enemy, ripe for condemnation. Unless he shake himself out of that kind of living, how can he expect the extraordinary favor to be granted to him, that he will die during one of the brief periods of readiness that follow his rare confessions, rather than during one of the long periods that he spends in the state of sin? All the odds are against him. All the experiences of life point to the probability that he will die as he mostly lived — indifferent to God, sin, the sacraments, and prayer.

GOD'S OPINION

INDIFFERENCE is also an object of God's special detestation. That's what God meant by the shocking words: "I would that you were cold or hot; but because you are lukewarm, I will begin to vomit you out of my mouth." Religion means man's recognition of the fact that God went all out for him; became a poor, despised, hungry, thirsty, cold, lonely, harried human

being to save him; became a criminal to die on the cross that was the only acceptable atonement for his sins; worked miracles, made promises, set up a Church, designed sacraments — all to arouse and increase a man's love, to insure his loyalty, and to secure his salvation. The indifferent Catholic says to all this: "So what? Leave me alone." It is not difficult to understand the retort of God to such an attitude: "I will begin to vomit you out of my mouth."

Lastly, indifference is the dragging brake that holds back the progress of Christianity and keeps the teachings of Christ from permeating all of society. Pagans can hardly be expected to think much of Christianity, nor to be attracted to it, if they see it only in the lives of indifferent Catholics. Thousands of unbelievers have been induced to accept Christ and enter His Church because they chanced to observe the beauty and power and peace of the lives of true and zealous Catholics. But equal thousands have been repelled from Christianity and stiffened in unbelief because they saw and knew only indifferent Catholics: men and women who thought little of drunkenness, adultery, injustice, and hatred; who professed to believe the tremendous truth that God took the form of bread to be their constant food, and who seldom received Him thus; whose religion taught them that prayer could conquer every evil arising in the heart of man, but who seldom prayed and were overcome by evil. The indifferent Catholic silences the voice in his neighbor's

heart that instinctively encourages him to be a Christian, and so he does the exact opposite of the command: "Go and teach all nations. . . . Be witnesses to me in the uttermost parts of the world."

Christmas is a good time for all Catholics to think over these things. The times are so evil and dangerous that only Christianity can save the world from unspeakable horrors of the future. The greatest horror is that indifferent Catholics will die in their sins, and that so many thousands of others will never be drawn to the fold of redemption and grace.

The secondary horror is that when Christians have a chance to salvage society from the ruin of its pagan philosophies, they may prefer to live by the same philosophies and to contribute to the ruin. That is their responsibility in being indifferent now.

Christmas is the beginning of Christianity — in the world and in the hearts of individuals. It has enough warmth and love and appeal and power to cast indifference out of every soul. If you have been indifferent, let this Christmas mark an awakening and a real conversion.

THE GOOD LIFE?

In equating the Christian way of life with the democratic way, we have also come to associate health, happiness and prosperity with goodness; and trials, tribulations and austerities we associate with evil. . . .

Most of us unabashedly strive for larger television sets, softer sofas, longer cars, and houses more and more suburban and elegant. When we discard things still serviceable for later, more elaborate models, we gloat about it. We absorb tons of advertising, the whole impetus of which is a matter-of-fact stimulation for acquiring more gadgets and for enjoying more comforts and greater conveniences. These are presented not only as the modern and progressive way of life but indeed also as the good life.

The Magnificat

WHAT IS LOVE?

Many men try to explain love but none can succeed for they try to define pagan love. . . . Christian love brings a sense of warmth not in the body but in the soul. Love is sacrifice; it is giving and not taking. Love is a mutual respect of two people — boy and girl — man and woman, for each other. Love is kindness, consideration, generosity, purity, prudence, thoughtfulness, understanding, patience, charity, trust and even humility. Love is an invisible bond holding two people together. Love is a sharing of thoughts, beliefs, ideals and goals.

It is a mutual participation in the disappointments as well as the joys. Love can be real only if it can withstand the problems and difficulties of life. Love is the longing of two people to find God together, to share their love with Him and to ask His blessing on them. Love must be stronger than the world, the flesh and the devil.

St. Ignatius Bulletin

pre-marriage clinic

SHOULD MID-TEEN-AGERS MARRY?

Donald F. Miller, C.S.S.R.

PROBLEM: Why do you say so often that it is not good for young people in their middle teens to marry? I am 16, in love with a good Catholic boy of 17, and we plan on getting married within a year. Our parents, supported by your statements, tell us that we are too young to marry, that we should wait until we are 20, that we will regret taking this step. We feel that we are old enough to know that we love each other dearly, and can and will have a most happy marriage. We do not think you have a right to tell us we should not marry.

SOLUTION: We have never made a universal statement to the effect that no young people in their middle teens should ever marry. We are too well aware of many factors that would make such a universal statement unwise and even wrong. What are some of those factors?

First, there is experience. We know that there have been *some* seemingly happy and successful Catholic marriages, entered into by teen-agers as young as 16 and 17. The fact that there have been some such makes it absurd to say that all such are unsuccessful.

Second, the law of the Catholic Church states a boy must be 16 and a girl 14 before they can enter a valid marriage. There is no impediment to valid marriage after these ages and we have no desire to create one.

Third, if a young couple of 16 and 17 came to us and asked our advice about getting married, our pastoral duty would be to consider the circumstances surrounding the case. Certainly the reasonable attitude of the parents of both would have to be considered. This factor would have to be weighed carefully: if the couple had been falling into sin, or having a most difficult time staying out of sin very long, and refused to give each other up, St. Paul's statement would have to be applied: "It is better to marry than to burn (with concupiscence and sin). And even apart from that circumstance (which enters into far too many cases) if the couple manifested real maturity of judgment, the possession of sound Catholic principles, and readiness for the sacrifices that early marriage involves, we could hardly raise solid objective arguments against the marriage.

What about the other side — the arguments against early marriages? There are many such arguments, but their purpose is to inspire young teen-agers not to get involved in love affairs and such constant company-keeping that they will either have to marry at an early age to escape sin, or will want to so badly that no argument against so doing will have any weight with them. In other words, when a young couple already hotly in love comes to a priest, he has to give the best advice he can in the circumstances, and the best advice may be that they get married. But when young teen-agers not yet involved in steady com-

pany-keeping are looking for advice by which to be guided, usually that advice will take the form of arguments in favor of not considering marriage, and of not preparing for it, until they are in their late teens or early twenties. What are some of these arguments?

First, experience. While experience proves that some early teen-age marriages succeed, it also proves that many, even the majority, do not. In other words, it's taking a chance against odds to enter such a marriage.

Second, it is easy to see why there are so many failures of such marriages. Youth, by which we mean the middle teens, enjoys a wholesome carefreeness that makes many innocent pleasures mean more than they will ever mean again. A girl marrying at 16 or 17, ordinarily will soon find herself tied down to the care of a child; before she is 20 she may have two or three children. Unless she is of unusual character, she may feel cheated and begin to pity herself almost before her marriage has had a good start. The same can be true for the boy. Self-pity is always the first crack that appears in the edifice of a marriage.

Third, love may make a couple of 17 think they possess a maturity that is by no means theirs. Under the husband's grind of making a living for his family, and under the wife's constant obligations to the home and children, both may find that they are still adolescents, not yet ready for the "grind" of serious responsibility.

Fourth, in these days when advanced education is so universally possible and so deeply cherished as an ideal, the young couple of 17, in getting married, ordinarily have to bring their education to a halt with the end of high school. Both will probably regret that later on.

Fifth, there are often economic problems. A lad of 17, unless he have independent wealth from his father, or rare abilities and opportunities, is not apt to attract a fat salary for what he can do. The young couple will have to have help from the parents of one or of both. This can lead to tensions, jealousies, bickerings, in-law trouble. It surely will not contribute to the happiness or success of the marriage.

These are some of the reasons why those learned and experienced in family problems, state that, all other things being adequate, the best time to get married is at or after 20 years of age.

OLD COMPLAINT

Some encouragement may be taken by those who find difficulty in digesting modern methods of education in a remark of one William Langland. He too criticized the school severely, and he lived six centuries ago.

Here is the quotation, reported by the *London Tablet*:

"If you take note, there is not a single modern schoolboy who can compose verses or write a decent letter. I doubt, too, whether one in a hundred can read a Latin author, or decipher a word of any foreign language, and no wonder, for at every level of our educational system you will find Humbug in charge, and his colleague, Flattery, tagging along behind him. As for dons and divinity lecturers, men who are supposed to master all branches of learning, and be ready to debate every problem and answer every argument, I am ashamed to say that if you were to examine them tomorrow in the arts and sciences they would all be ploughed."

A Child before the Crib

If we want to learn the true meaning of the Christmas-crib scene, we must look at it with the simple faith and tender love of a child.

"Put a little more straw in the manger, and move that gray sheep farther up the hill," called Father Timothy Casey from a pew in the rear of the church, whither he had gone to view at a distance the result of his efforts in arranging a devotional Christmas crib.

Little Billy Corrigan, who had persistently tagged after the priest during the entire operation, proud of his commission, carried out the orders given.

"Brace up St. Joseph. He's lopsided. No, the other way. Good! Now," and he surveyed the whole with an appraising eye, "I believe that is satisfactory. Come down here with me, Billy, and see what you think of it."

"After all," thought the priest, "the Christmas crib is the delight principally of the children. Billy ought to be able to tell me what arrangement pleases a child."

But he had reckoned without regard for the poet in every child mind; for the lad had no sooner trotted in and knelt beside the pastor, with his two little hands cupped on the pew-back and his chin nestled snugly between them, than the

statues of baked clay and their artificial setting vanished and he was back in Bethlehem on the first Christmas night. He looked long and lovingly, the changing lights on his expressive face telling how sweet, holy thoughts came and went.

"The sheep know He's God, don't they, Father?"

"Sheep have no minds, Billy. They do not even know there is a God."

"But if God could make Himself a little baby, He could make the sheep know He is God."

The priest concluded that all his learned books could not withstand the simple philosophy and living faith of the child. How often he had watched the great wondering eyes of the children, during their short but frequent visits to the crib, and had longed to divine what thoughts and affections were formed in these innocent souls, with the infused faith of baptism still so fresh within them. So like God's angels were these unspoiled little ones, that he often wondered whether angel whispers did not sometimes reach their ears. And how jealously they guarded their most intimate thoughts from the critical knowledge of the grown-ups. Ques-

tioning elicited only stereotyped answers. But now little Billy seemed about to lay his child soul bare. The priest attended immovable and almost breathless, lest by some ill-chosen answer he might break the spell.

"See that sheep next to the manger?" the boy prattled on. "That sheep knows He's God: That's why it just stands there and looks at Him and don't eat no straw. I think sheep are nice, don't you, Father? That dog, the shepherd's got, is a shepherd dog. He follows the sheep 'way up the mountain and chases away the wolves when they want to eat up the little lambs. Gee, I'd like to have a dog that saw God! That's a little bit of a lamb that other shepherd is carrying on his shoulder. Jesus is looking at him. Jesus is glad he is kind to the little lamb. He liked little lambs."

"Yes," replied Father Casey, "He used to call Himself the Lamb of God that was killed to take away the sins of the world."

"But the lamb has a nice warm woolly coat, and Jesus is cold. I guess the Blessed Mother gave Him all the cover she could find. We have a little baby at our house, and he shivers even when the steam is up and the room is warm. But there wasn't any steam in that old stable, was there? The rocks fell down and left that big hole in the wall, and the wind blew in and made poor little Jesus shiver. And nobody wouldn't let the Blessed Mother bring Him in out of the cold. They said they had no room, didn't they?

I bet they could come in, if they came to our house. Mamma would make me a bed on the floor, and they could have my room."

"You will make a warm place for Him in your heart when He comes to you in Holy Communion at the midnight Mass, and love Him as much as you can. That will please Him more than if you received Him into your house. He came down from heaven because He loves you and wants you to love Him," said the priest.

Billy looked up quickly.

"Did He know — even while He was there in the stable with the sheep and everything — did Jesus know there was going to be a little boy like me?"

"He knew it perfectly well," replied the priest. "Now, of course, I couldn't think distinctly of so many people at once, because I have just a poor little human mind. But you know, Jesus is God — even while He is a tiny shivering baby, He is God — and God can do everything. And so He was thinking of you just as much as if you were the only person in the world. He was not only thinking of you, He was loving you, loving you with the great love of His Sacred Heart. He saw everything that you would ever say or do or think. If He saw that you would love Him, it made Him happy; if He saw that you would offend Him by sin, it made Him suffer."

"Then He sees that I was stubborn when dad scolded me, and that I told a lie, and that I took a dime out of mamma's purse, that I *stole*. I guess He doesn't like me. He likes

that sheep better than He likes me, 'cause that sheep never done any sin."

"No, Billy; He likes you better than all the sheep and all the gold and everything else in the world, because you have a soul. He came down from heaven and died a painful death on the cross to save that soul of yours. Even if you did commit sins, if you are sorry—"

"Oh, I *am* sorry!" Billy hastily drew a sleeve across his eyes.

Father Casey, watching from the corner of his eye, saw that the sleeve was wet with tears, and he asked himself whether anything he had ever given to God in all his priestly life was so precious in His sight as the loving penitent tears of this little child.

"He knows I'm sorry, don't He?"

"Yes, Billy," was all the priest dared say.

"St. Joseph doesn't know what to do, does he? He tried his best to get a nice warm place for Jesus and the Blessed Mother, but they all said they didn't have any room. I guess St. Joseph has big bumps on his hands like Mister Brennan from sawing boards and hammering nails. St. Joseph isn't His honest-to-goodness father, is he?"

"No, St. Joseph is the foster father of Jesus."

"What's a foster father?"

"A foster father is one who takes the place of a real father. God, the Father, up in heaven, is the real Father of Jesus. St. Joseph took His place here in this world and worked to provide food and clothing and shelter for Jesus and His Mother."

"I guess," continued the lad, "the Blessed Mother will let St. Joseph hold Him sometimes. Mamma lets me hold our baby. He's an awful nice baby. Wouldn't it be great to hold God! Who was that saint you told us about that played with Jesus when he was a little boy?"

"That was St. Gerard. He was hardly more than a baby himself at the time. He came into the church one day and went up before the statue of the Blessed Virgin, where his mother used to bring him. And the Infant Jesus in her arms seemed to come to life. He climbed down and played with St. Gerard on the floor of the church for a while. Then He went back into His mother's arms."

"I guess he just had to be a saint after that," said Billy. "He couldn't ever forget that Jesus came and played with him."

"We shouldn't ever forget that Jesus was born in a cold stable for us and died on a cross for us and comes into our hearts and stays with us and blesses us every time we receive Holy Communion."

"I won't forget. If He wants anything I got, He sure can have it."

"He wants your heart."

"How can I give it to Him?"

"By loving Him," said the priest.

There are many beautiful meditations for Christmas Eve, printed in books. Father Casey did not use any of them that night; instead, he tried to contemplate the stupendous mystery of God made man with the simple faith and tender love of a Christian child.

SIDEGLANCES

By the Bystander

**How To Promote
Interracial Justice**

THIS writer of the Sideglances has attended scores of conventions in his life as a priest, and sometimes is inclined to agree with those who say that the net practical results of such conventions are somewhat dubious. But during the last week of August we attended one that was different. It was the first of its kind ever held in America, and it was concerned with a topic that should be of deepest concern to all Americans. It was called the first national conference of the 36 Catholic Interracial Councils that have been formed in 36 large cities of the United States. Against the background of the racial problem in Little Rock, and with the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States as yet unrendered on the appeal concerning public school integration there, the conference went about its business of trying to resolve some of the problems of interracial justice with dignity, charity, patience and humble dependence on the help of God and the cooperation of all men of good will.

Every Catholic should know something about the Catholic Interracial Councils; he should

know something about how this national meeting of representatives of all the councils went about its work in Chicago; he should know how badly needed are more such councils, and how smoothly and quietly, in the midst of uproar and emotionalism, they go about the task of bringing the ideal of interracial justice into practical realization among men.

What is a Catholic Interracial Council? It is a group of Catholic white and colored citizens in any city who agree to come together once a week 1) to discuss problems connected with the relations between the races, and 2) to listen to experts in some field of human relations that involves or touches upon problems between white and colored people. To these forums and discussions, any member of the public, Catholic or not, is invited as a guest. The Councils have no collections and no dues. Thirty-six large cities of the United States now have such councils, but they are not directly affiliated in any way. Each one is a local unit, trying to bring justice and charity into race relations in the city where it oper-

ates. The parent Catholic Interracial Council is that of New York City, which was founded in 1944, and whose members offer advice and help to groups wishing to establish councils in other cities. In most cases, after a Catholic Interracial Council has been formed, the bishop or archbishop of the see involved appoints a Catholic priest as chaplain and moderator of the activities of the group.

Two giant Catholic figures are chiefly responsible for the origin and development of the Catholic Interracial Council idea. The one is Father John LaFarge, a Jesuit whose shoulders are bent under the weight of his years and his service to the Church, but whose zeal and energy are those usually associated with youth. Throughout his whole priestly life he has been a leader in the cause of interracial justice and charity, and has written or edited several books that present the basic Christian philosophy in this matter. He has been for many years the chaplain of the New York City Catholic Interracial Council. The other pioneer in the movement is George K. Hunton, who, with Father La Farge, brought the first Catholic Interracial Council into being, and who for many years has been the editor of the monthly publication called *Interracial Review*. Both Father La Farge and George Hunton have given much of their time and service to helping groups in other cities than New

York to found their own Catholic Interracial Councils.

The Chicago Conference of representatives of the 36 local councils in the United States was made possible by financial grants from the Field Foundation, the Emil Schwartzhaupt Foundation, and the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation. This was really an educational conference, rather than an authoritative or legislative conference, and the grants of the three Foundations made possible the bringing to Chicago of an impressive battery of experts in business, in education, in government, in law, in religion, and in related fields, who could give the conference the benefit of long experience and sound practical advice in the matter of race relations. Some 350 delegates from New York to California, from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, were present to learn whatever could be of use to them for improving race relations in their own local areas.

SINCE the purpose of the conference was chiefly educational, its main work was done in four commissions (any one of which could be attended by any delegate to the conference and even by the public) which concentrated on particular problems of race relations. The four commissions were 1) on schools; 2) on housing; 3) on employment; 4) on parochial and institutional life. It was in these commission sessions that the experts spoken

of above were heard from. After all the testimony had been taken, the previously assigned members of the commission, five in number, drew up a list of conclusions, recommendations, guiding principles for those who would concern themselves with working for interracial justice in their local areas.

How well this worked out can be seen from the experience of the writer of these lines. He had been asked to act as secretary to the commission on housing, and as such to take down and correlate the important points in the testimony of leaders in the field of housing. For three hours at a time, on two consecutive days, the commission on housing listened to such men and women as Clifford J. Campbell, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of City Planning, Chicago; Miss Frances Levenson, executive director of the National Committee against Discrimination in Housing in New York; Dr. George W. Snowden, assistant to the Commissioner of Intergroup Relations Service of the Federal Housing Administration in Washington. Others heard were lawyers, bankers, builders, publishers, priests. Out of these many hours of tedious but important testimony certain conclusions had to be inevitably drawn.

These were some of the conclusions. 1) At the very root of neighborhood clashes over the entrance of colored families into

white neighborhoods there is always prejudice — an unjustified feeling that all Negroes are in some way inferior to white people. This must be combatted by prayer, by personal charity and zeal, by community action, by the proven effectiveness of the principle behind Catholic Interracial Councils namely, that when white and colored people get to know one another, prejudices dissolve. 2) City, state and federal authorities are bound in conscience to do long-range, over-all planning for the housing needs of those who are under their jurisdiction, whenever it becomes evident that (as is the case of all big city slums) action to provide decent housing cannot or will not be taken on a private scale. They are bound especially to plan decent housing for low-income, large-family groups, which, abundant testimony revealed, are not able to find housing in an open market except in slums and ghettos. 3) Laws against discrimination in housing along lines of race and color do not destroy prejudice, but they are a powerful educating force, they are a prod to the community conscience, they support right-thinking but timid people, and sometimes they are necessary to enforce the natural law against outright injustice. Such laws, when wisely conceived, should be supported by legislators and all right-thinking people. 4) Unscrupulous real estate operators have been proved to be one of the important factors in the creation of

ghettos and the perpetuation of slums. They buy or lease run-down properties cheaply, then resell or re-lease at exorbitant profits. Sometimes they even promote panic-flight from neighborhoods on the part of whites for the sake of profits. Good, conscientious realtors, of whom there are many, should band together against such unethical operators. Laws should be made and enforced to drive the latter out of the real estate field.

No one at the Chicago conference believed that what was said and done there would solve any of the intricate problems of racial injustice. But all went away convinced that a long step forward had been taken by the very fact that white and colored leaders from every section of the land could sit down together, pin-point the problems, and talk and dream about and determine to work for solutions. It was often said, during the conference, that there

should not be merely 36 Catholic Interracial Conferences in the United States, but that the number of such councils should be doubled and tripled. Perhaps some Catholics reading these lines, in cities where there are at present no such councils, will be moved to take steps toward forming them.

His Excellency, Bishop Hillinger of Chicago, expressed the sentiments of the hierarchy in Chicago, and of the dozen or more bishops who sent words of greeting and encouragement to the conference at the huge banquet held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. He read a message of blessing and felicitation from the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, to the conference. Then he said: "This blessing is from the Vicar of Christ on earth. This assures us that Christ Himself is with us, in this work for interracial justice. And if Christ is with us, who can be against us?"

THE GREAT DESTROYER

I am the world's greatest destroyer. I feed upon the mistakes of people. I laugh at human frailty and the greater the frailty the heartier my guffaws. I am contemptuous of the patient plodder. I pick flaws in things that others regard as noble and fine. I break hearts and am responsible for bitter tears. I dim the light of home and darken the glow of faith.

I make fun of the pious and I caricature the children and things of God. I retard the work of the ambitious builder of things. I scatter the seeds of weeds among the roses. I delight in speaking words that are poison-tipped. I am the friend of despair. Never in the history of man have I been known to do a constructive thing. I am, in brief, the world's greatest destroyer—I am the destructive critic.

T. J. McNerney



readers retort

In which readers are invited to express their minds on articles and opinions published in *The Liguorian*. Letters must be signed and full address of the writer must be given, though city and name will be withheld from publication on request.

School and Home

Nearly always I agree with what you publish in THE LIGUORIAN; but there is one statement in a Pointed Paragraph in the September issue with which I heartily disagree. In telling parents to prepare their children for school you say that if the sisters decide on correction and punishment in some form or other, the punishment should be considered just and deserved, and that it should be added to by the parents at home. Why added to at home? I believe the sisters are perfectly capable of meting out punishment to suit the offense and I see no reason why my child should be afraid of coming home and telling me all his or her troubles and then have to expect further punishment from me for the same offense. Yes, I would agree with the sister and tell my child that the sister was right in punishing, but I would stop at that. Of course, all children are different, but if I were to punish my children on the heels of punishment received at school, the results would be far from encouraging. The home is a refuge where the child may return and fearlessly tell all its troubles without any fear of further punishment. In many cases such added punishment might very possibly cause the child to conceal his wrongdoing or lie about it.

California

Mrs. C. K.

• *When we stated that punishment given at school should be added to at home, we made this statement not as a matter of*

Catholic doctrine or practice but as an expression of opinion on our part. We believe that such punishment at home can be administered in a manner that is quite salutary. This punishment need not be serious or violent; it might be only the deprivation of some small privilege. From our own experience and from the experience of others with whom we discussed this matter, we know that such added punishment can do a world of good. We do not say that it is wrong or a failure on the part of the parents if punishment is not added at home. This is something to be decided by the parents and depends also on the personality or character of the child. If parents follow the "no punishment at home" policy, and if they avoid the danger of sympathizing with the child because of the punishment (which is easy to do, even for a good mother), we see nothing to condemn in the "no punishment at home" policy. However, we still cast a personal vote for at least a slight "sanction" at home.

The editors

Garbled Prayers

With tongue only partway in cheek may I add mistake No. 11 to the *Ten Mistakes in Prayer* listed in the article in the September LIGUORIAN? Here it is: "In vocal prayer, the more rapidly the words are spoken, the better the prayer." This erroneous concept seems to develop in both the cleric and lay Catholic with age. It is

manifested at most all church functions where vocal group prayer is held, except when the sole participants are children or newly ordained priests. Catholics in these latter categories can usually be relied upon to pray slowly and, we might add, reverently. The rest of us are wont to fit the maximum number of words into the shortest span of time. Not satisfied with the prayer-speed of his congregation, many a priest will, for example, break into the response of his flock to a given prayer and begin the next prayer (thus doubling the effectiveness of the prayers during the overlap?). I feel sure that racing through prayers is not motivated by impatience or an urge to finish up a tedious, distasteful chore, but rather by a misapprehension concerning how to pray. Therefore let the record be set straight: a single *Hail Mary*, devoutly said, is worth a whole rosary recited as garbled mish-mash. Amen.

Memphis, Tenn.

E. K. L.

• *The point made in this letter deserves the serious consideration of all Catholics — and it certainly would be no waste of time for all of us, priests and laity, to examine our conscience on this matter. However, we believe that the matter was a bit overstated. During the past two months this editor has been in nine different parish churches, in various cities and states, during the time of the Sunday Masses. In not one of them did he notice undue hurry in the recitation of the prayers after Mass and no overlapping on the part of the priest, although there was some lack of unison in the recitation of the prayers. But we must admit that, at other times, we have heard also the hurried prayers and the overlapping prayers. Even if only one out of a hundred congregations or priests would be culpable in this matter, it would still be too many, and a good purpose of amendment would be in order, because to pray in that manner is a mistake that pleads publicly for amendment.*

The editors

Hobbies and Education

In the September LIGUORIAN you had a short article on "The New Mental Discipline," in which you seemed to find fault with taking courses offered by the adult education program held evenings in the public schools of some cities. I happen to have taken three semesters of cake decorating in one of the public schools and I certainly learned a lot in that class. Some of the women went on to earn extra money for their meager family income. Please don't think that this is idle waste of time. The good Lord wants us to keep occupied, and we certainly can do nice things with a course like this whenever a bake sale or a bazaar comes up for our church. This year I am thinking of learning to knit because I can make inexpensive gifts for my family. Is that wrong? Don't you think it would be better for some people to keep busy learning new things instead of sitting back and saying, "I can't," and being very unhappy? I am certain God is pleased with our efforts to bring a little sunshine into some child's life with a fancy, decorated birthday cake or to cheer up a sick person with a large cupcake made like a basket of flowers. Maybe you didn't know that these were things we learned in these adult education classes. Would you please give a little explanation about this matter?

Ohio

Mrs. R. M. I.

• *The item we published in the September issue was a "filler" which we borrowed, as is the custom, from another publication; but we did give it approval by publishing it. It is not wrong to learn things like cake decorating, jewelry making, flower making, personal grooming, slimnastics, golf. It is useful to learn and to know these things. But the point is this: can these courses, which are offered to adults, really be called education in the strict sense of the word? Any development of a capability we possess is, in a wide sense, a kind of education. But is this the kind of education our schools are supposed to offer? Instruction*

in hobbies, in cake decorating, archery, car-care, should not, in our opinion, be offered by our schools under the name of adult education. That is the point we made by quoting the item.

The editors

The Bride is Back

In your September issue you published some letters criticizing the article, *Here Comes the Bride*. May I take the witness stand in defense of the article? When we were married we did almost all of the things spoken of in the article, but within certain limits. We didn't hire a consultant but we did hire a dressmaker who was wonderful but expensive. We set the date after we had reserved a suitable hall for the reception. We saw the florist, got the rings, the band, arranged with the caterer and the baker. Not necessarily like a *De Mille* movie, but we held our own. Then the tuxedos had to be just so — and oh, yes, the photographer! Last of all we thought of the church arrangements. To us this matter of going to the priest and making arrangements for the wedding was just another obligation. All this formality of filling out forms and making affidavits and answering questions! It was just something we had to do as Catholics. We had no more intention of abiding by God's law on birth control than the man in the moon. We figured that was our secret. The church wedding and the Mass was definitely wanted, and thank God we did. Then the bills came rolling in. The money we got as gifts went out again to pay for an expensive honeymoon to Florida. We couldn't really afford it, but it was a *must* and we had to keep up the show. Three years later, thanks to God and my wonderful, patient and understanding mother-in-law, we finally paid the ever-coming bills. As far as even going to church again during those three miserable years — well, it was just another obligation and we couldn't get up early enough to bother. How God

put up with our audacity I'll never know. Then we had our first child. Well, after tiring of hitting our heads against a stone wall we started to pray; then we began going to church again. We made a mission and for the next five years we tried very hard to make up for our failings by receiving the sacraments, going to Mass and by trying to do something for God by helping other young couples who were in danger of getting off to a wrong start. We have three children now, we are active in our parish organizations and we feel that we really began to live only after we had come back to the ways of God. Give us more articles like *Here Comes the Bride*. The bright lights and glamor of Hollywood have blinded many young couples. Chicago, Ill. R. J. M.

And Again. . .

In the Readers Retort column of your September issue was a letter written by A. M. of St. Charles, Missouri. The letter criticized the article, *Here Comes the Bride*, by Father H. S. Smith, C.S.S.R. I write this letter because of a remark A. M. made in the letter which made my blood boil. A. M. said, "I had always heard that many people enter the convent or seminary because of being disappointed in love." I'd like to become a cloistered Carmelite and spend the rest of my life imitating the little way of St. Therese. And if I do become a sister it will be because I *want* to, not because I was disappointed in love. When entering a convent or seminary you have to present letters of recommendation from your pastor and confessor. They would not recommend anyone for entrance because of being disappointed in love. You do not choose God; God chooses you. And priests and sisters do not take God's never-ending love as a substitute for a "lost" love. I have read *Here Comes the Bride* three times and I cannot see what set A. M. on fire. Not all little girls and their mothers dream of the girls' wedding day. I am fifteen years old and the oldest of

five girls and second oldest of nine children. I want to be a sister. Johnny, sixteen, is interested in sports. David, ten, wants to be a policeman (like a lot of boys at that age). Mary Janis, nine, wants to be a teacher and then get married. Michael, seven, wants to be a fireman or else a bishop (and help people, like Bishop Sheen). Mary Beth, six, wants to be a Dominican teacher and help Sister Marise, her kindergarten sister. Mary Geralyn, five, wants to be a police-woman and a mother. Mary Patricia, three, is content being a little girl. And Christopher, five months, will help support the Gerber and other baby food companies for a while. My mother and father pray that if any of us have a religious calling from God, we will answer it. They'll let us choose our own future for we are the ones who will be doing it for the rest of our lives. I do not see how any sensible person could miss the point in Father Smith's article about weddings, namely that parents should put God on the top of their list of preparations.

Milwaukee, Wis.

M. J. P.

Help for Teacher

For the past year I have been teaching the four grades of high school in our local parish. That isn't as big a job as it sounds, since there are only 18 Catholic pupils in my class. This year I have two seniors and have been desperately trying to think of some gift that would not only remind them of their time spent in Confraternity of Christian Doctrine classes, but also enable them to continue growing in their faith. Then the inspiration hit me — a two-year subscription to your wonderful magazine. Frankly, teacher herself has gained much knowledge from the pages of your publication over the last three years, and this knowledge has been of tremendous aid in putting over the teachings and doctrines of the Church. We have neither Catholic grade school or high school here, and in

many cases we start from scratch in our teaching of religion. We can use all the help available, and magazines like yours that do not compromise or varnish the facts are really appreciated. Keep up the good work and, God willing, I hope to be able to give each of my graduates over the years a gift subscription to **THE LIGUORIAN** as they will need it more than ever when they leave their religion classes. Montesano, Wash.

Mrs. P. Z.

Sick-Room Guide

I would like to see an article appear in your magazine about what a Catholic should do when a priest is summoned to a sick person in the home. I have had other Catholics ask me about this problem and I was not certain of what should be done in regard to the priest, the sick person and the others in the home.

Phoenix, Ariz.

Mrs. G. S.

• A pamphlet, **SICK-ROOM GUIDE**, may be obtained from *Liguorian Pamphlets, Liguori, Missouri*, for five cents. This booklet gives full instructions about what is to be done when a priest is called to attend a sick person in the home and also gives helpful instructions on how the members of the family can be of help to the sick and the dying.

The editors

These Critical Letters!

Our discussion club reads your magazine at our meetings each month, but please, why do you print all these letters criticizing the Catholic Church? Why not publish more letters showing that people believe in the teaching of the Catholic Church? We have converts in our group and when they read that many Catholics leave the Church because of laws they don't approve of — birth control, etc. — they wonder how many good practicing Catholics we have — or whether all Catholics are hypocrites. Before joining the Church these persons had the impression that all Cath-

olics were trying to be good practicing Catholics, accepting everything. We wonder if all these letters "against" are making our new members stronger in the faith. Mich.

Mrs. L. L.

• In our July issue of this year we inserted an editor's note in the Readers Retort section briefly stating the reasons why we publish letters which are quite critical and antagonistic. Perhaps this note escaped the attention of the writer of the above letter. Before we state these reasons anew we should like to remark that converts to the Catholic faith are ordinarily told and warned plainly not to expect all the members of the Church — and this includes clergy and laity — to be perfect Catholics. The weeds are always growing in the field, as the Gospel parable tells us. We publish letters of disagreement, violent and unrestrained though they be, for several reasons. 1. To show how even Catholics can be led astray in their thinking and living by the great pressure-group we call the world as well as by the smaller groups and individuals who seem to live according to the homemade set of rules they choose to call a religion and which they change with the fashion of the times. 2. If people express these disagreeing and violent opinions in letters to the magazine, then it is logical to infer that they express them also in speech, and those who must listen to them ought to have an answer. 3. The fact that we receive such letters of disagreement, many times on matters of fundamental Catholic doctrine, is evidence to our readers that there is need for us to keep on repeating in our magazine the teaching of the Church on the points which are so often challenged.

The editors

As We Were Saying. . .

I am just trying to light a candle to throw a little light. The fact that you get so many letters from "off-the-track Catholics" prompts me to write a thought I have long had in regard to Catholic school

training. Why not make it a part of the religion course in our high schools to let the students know about the attitudes toward religion which they will have to face later on in their business and social contacts? They could be presented with and attuned to attitudes such as are expressed in the violent letters to the editor which you publish. I sometimes wonder if the people I work with really believe there is a God and an after-life. We can't keep our eyes closed to these things when we live in the world, and it is a good thing, I believe, for our younger people to have their eyes opened even while they are in high school so that they will be prepared to meet and stand up against the attitudes and views and opinions expressed by the many half-pagans we live with and by the disgruntled Catholics as well.

Virginia

M. B.

Kind Words

After nine years of Catholic education I thought I knew just about everything there was for a lay person to know about our faith. During this time, however, I had been in contact only with people of the Catholic faith. Only after being "out in the world" and working with, dealing with, and dating a few non-Catholics did I realize how very little I did know. It is most embarrassing and frustrating to be asked a question about something you practice and believe in with all your heart and soul, to know the answer in your own mind, but still not be able to answer the question or explain the matter satisfactorily to others. Needless to say, your magazine has been a tremendous help. Chicago, Ill.

M. A. B.

I have had 12 years of Catholic education and my husband has had 16 years of Catholic education, yet we never cease to find something new and/or something being explained more clearly to us in your magazine.

Northridge, Calif.

Mrs. K. S.

Problems of Professional People

What about Vivisection?

PROBLEM: I am a medical student, and in connection with my laboratory work I regularly use living animals for experimental purposes. Some of my friends have recently told me that it is a sin to use animals in this way. Will you please explain the Catholic doctrine on this matter?

SOLUTION: The Catholic Church teaches that human beings have complete dominion over the other living creatures of earth and may use them for their own advantage in any reasonable way. For, after creating the first man and woman, God said to them: "Rule over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air and all living creatures that move upon the earth." (Genesis, 1:28) Accordingly, men may use animals as beasts of burden or slay them to provide themselves with food or clothing. They may even pursue them and kill them for the sake of sport, like the angler. Scientists are fully justified when they use animals as the source of vaccines and serums. And, to reply explicitly to the problem proposed by our correspondent, it is perfectly lawful to use living animals as subjects of experiments and of research if there is a probability that students of medicine and surgery will thereby derive greater skill in the treatment of human beings or new methods of affording remedies for human ailments.

We have said that man may use animals *reasonably* for his advantage. Certainly, it is unreasonable and wrong to be unnecessarily cruel to animals, because such a

manner of conduct tends to degrade the character of the person who indulges in it. Accordingly, the medical student should use anesthetics on the animals with which he experiments, when this is possible. But when he cannot remove all pain, his experiments are nevertheless justifiable, as long as there is some hope that they will be helpful in the treatment of human diseases.

Some persons have an exaggerated notion of the pain endured by animals and put it in the same category as the pain suffered by human beings who have attained the age of reason. This is incorrect, as a comparison will show. To any of my readers who suffered a painful ailment in the first few weeks of his life I now put the question: "Were you conscious of any pain?" The answer will be in the negative, because as yet the intelligence was not functioning, and human consciousness (with the ability to suffer pain as a human being in the full sense) begins only with the use of reason. Yet, the baby in pain screams and moans and writhes. His suffering is real but only physical. Such is the suffering of the animal; and hence it is erroneous to regard it as similar to that of a human being with the use of intelligence. Indeed, Pope Pius XII in a recent address did not hesitate to say that the cries of an animal in distress are essentially no different from the "sighing" of the branches of a tree when they are cut down.

The purpose of these remarks is not to encourage cruelty to animals. On the con-

trary, it is a truly Christian attitude to be kind to all animals, and many of the saints were noted for this characteristic. But it is not a Christian attitude to give animals the rights proper to human beings, and that is what many persons are doing nowadays.

A few months ago, when I asserted that the Russians were fully justified in putting a dog in their Sputnik, I received letters of protest from all parts of our country. Many of these writers manifested an affection and sympathy toward this animal such as would be given to a child in the same situation — like the lady who expressed her horror at this way of treating “a darling, innocent dog.” Another writer suggested that it would have been better to use “a Catholic brat” as a passenger in the Sputnik instead of a dog.

There is a humorous side to this excessive attachment to animals. Frequently in New York on Sunday mornings I see dis-

tinguished gentlemen and well-groomed ladies giving a dog his morning walk. I feel sure that in some of the households from which these persons come the interests of the dog — his food, his exercise, the care of his teeth, the preparation of his sleeping accommodations, etc., are just as important as the needs of any of the members of the family. There is a certain element of humor in this phase of American life, I say; but it is also sad and alarming, for it betokens a pagan attitude, the neglect of the fundamental truth that every human being, because of his spiritual and immortal soul, is far more important, both naturally and supernaturally, than all the animals in the world. This is the principle that justifies the use of vivisection when it may prove useful toward the medical treatment of human beings.

Very Rev. Francis J. Connell,
C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.
The Catholic University of America.

YOUR WITNESS!

Little Tommie's mother came to tuck him into bed. “Who,” she scolded him, “didn't hang up his clothes before he went to bed?”

“Adam!” answered Tommie from under the covers.

LIGUORIAN BINDERS

We have had hard-cover binders made to order for holding 12 copies of THE LIGUORIAN in a single volume. Anyone can insert the issues in the binder. Those who preserve their copies of THE LIGUORIAN for reference will find the binders very handy, with the index always at the end of the December issue. Order binders from THE LIGUORIAN, Liguori, Mo., at \$2.50 each.

IF YOU CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS

Please notify us promptly of your change of address, giving both your old and new address. It makes it easy for our office if you cut your stenciled address from the rear cover of one of your issues of THE LIGUORIAN and send it in when asking for a change of address. Notify us by the tenth of the month if your copy for that month has not been delivered.

The Bridge God Built in the Sky

**Our old friend, evolution,
and our new friend,
spaceship travel, join hands
to lead the way to Christ,
Who "sitteth at the
right hand of God."**

RAYMOND J. MILLER, C.S.S.R.

It is a quaint old phrase, "Sitteth at the right hand of God."

We learned it long ago in catechism class; and it goes back to the earliest days of Christianity. St. Paul used it in his Epistles, St. Mark in his Gospel; our Lord Himself brought it into one of His arguments with the Pharisees, and it was on His lips during His trial the night before He died; even King David, a thousand years before Christ, says in his 109th Psalm:

The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand: until I place thy enemies as a footstool beneath thy feet.

And yet the venerable old phrase has an application to modern science, especially to two spoiled children of modern science, namely evolution and spaceship travel.

The meaning of the phrase is that Jesus Christ as man, as a human being, now shares in heaven the pow-

er of God almighty over all creatures on the earth, under the earth, and above the earth. It is part of what Christians call "the mystery of the Incarnation." This mystery, as we are taking it now, has two phases:

1) the Son of God came down from heaven and became a human being; 2) He returned to heaven with His—and our—human nature; and as a human being, one of our own race, He now "sitteth at the right hand of God."

The first phase is the one that has an application to evolution; and the second, to spaceship travel.

* * *

EVOLUTION is a child of modern science, and there is much good in the child, if only it were not so spoiled by its friends.

Modern science has shown that life in this world goes back millions of years; that the first forms of life were simple little cell-like creatures; that later on there came more complicated organisms, then still higher complications: a kind of procession lasting millions of years; plants, fishes, birds, animals, apes, finally culminating in man. This is evolution as

good, honest, hardworking modern science has given it to us.

But evolution has become a spoiled child because of the way it has been treated by its friends. Some of them hardly seem to understand the child. They make it say the strangest things and feed it sweets that are not good for it at all. They put it up to making faces at religion, and claiming that it has done away with God and Christ and Christianity.

For instance, evolution is a theory: a respectable theory with much to recommend it, to be sure; but it is a spoiled theory when it is made to parade as an unquestionable fact. At times it has been victimized by unscrupulous publicity hunters or jokesters, who palmed off frauds upon it, and made it swallow them whole, much to its distress later on. Sometimes, moreover, its language is almost incoherent. Depending on which of its friends is at its side, it says the most inconsistent things: now, that man has been on this earth a billion years; next, that it is only forty thousand; then, a million; then back to a hundred thousand.

Sometimes, again, the child does not seem to be able to make up its mind. It is even led to contradict its own parent. Responsible science holds and teaches, for instance, as a very dogma of science universally accepted by sober scientists since the time of the scientist Louis Pasteur, that non-life cannot produce life. Yet not infrequently little evolution is heard piping up to the effect that in the long procession of living things through the ages, the lower

not only preceded the higher, but actually produced it: non-life produced life; non-consciousness produced consciousness; and unintelligence produced intelligence. This is evolution, the child of modern science, become a spoiled brat indeed.

But it is in connection with religion that its behaviour is strangest of all. It seems to have a positive dislike for religion. Under the influence of certain of its friends it sneers at it and calls it names: medieval, outmoded, superstitious, ignorant. The child is even prompted at times to make the extraordinary claim that it has supplanted religion; and that in itself, simply as evolution, it can account for all human progress and for the present state of humanity.

But the procession of various forms of life through millions of years, from the lowest in the beginning to the highest at the present time, does not "account for" our present condition.

We may remember the circus parades of the earlier years of this century. In Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Circus, for instance, the parade was the great morning attraction of the affair. All the children were downtown to see it wend its way through the main streets of the city: camels, elephants, lions and tigers, monkeys, clowns, brass bands, circus performers. But these attractions did not "account for" Buffalo Bill riding on his white stallion near the end of the parade. The various figures had been arranged

intelligently by Buffalo Bill himself to lead up to and culminate in his own figure, the high light of the entire procession.

So too, evolution, the process or procession of creatures in ever higher forms on this planet for the last billion years; it does not "account for" humanity; it did not produce humanity. It was produced for humanity. It was produced by God for humanity and for one human being in particular: for Jesus Christ, the God Man.

This is evolution in its true nature: the child of God as well as the child of modern science; the child of God long ages before it was the child of science, and long before modern science discovered its existence. And if this be evolution, then Christians love the child. They cannot get enough of it. Far from being disturbed by it, they consider a billion years of it rather a short time than otherwise. Seeing that it is a preparation for the *mystery* of the Incarnation, for the infinite becoming finite, the Creator becoming a creature, God becoming man, they believe that a billion times a billion years of the grand parade of evolution would still be a feeble, inadequate preparation.

"Sitteth at the right hand of God," then, is what gives the true meaning to modern evolution. Evolution did not produce itself; non-life did not produce life; but God almighty produced every new step in the parade as leading the way to the Incarnation, and to the glorification of hu-

man nature as it "sitteth at the right hand of God."

* * *

BUT the phrase has another application: it is connected with that other spoiled child of modern science, namely, spaceship travel.

Modern science has unquestionably given to the world some notable inventions and discoveries in this field: the hundred-inch telescope, and now the two-hundred-inch; methods of computing the chemical make-up of planets and stars, even the most remote; equipment for recognizing radioactivity in the stars far off in distant space. Besides, there are the inventions that have made at least some travel in space a reality: ordinary airplane travel to begin with, then jet planes; supersonic speeds, travel faster than sound; rockets, rocket ships; Sputniks and Explorers (with a dog or mouse inside).

These are real discoveries and inventions; but there are various "spoiled children" of these real achievements of modern science; not all of them equally spoiled, nor all spoiled in the same way. Flying saucers, science fiction, trips by human beings in spaceships to the moon or to Mars and beyond, the existence of intelligent beings on other planets: they are all the children of sober modern science; but they are not all equally sober themselves.

Flying saucers will have to be sobered considerably before they are worthy of their hardworking par-

ent. Science fiction is a wonderfully interesting child, but sober science throws up its hands in despair if it tries to follow its unpredictable goings-on. Trips to the moon by human beings are being advertised more or less soberly by friends of modern science as hardly more formidable than a summer journey to the Caribbean or to South America; but they will have to undergo a severe course of discipline and training before they cease to be irresponsible spoiled children and become just as respectable as their parent, science.

As regards religion, spaceship travel in general has not been guilty of the name calling and grimacing sometimes indulged in by its little cousin evolution. Here and there its friends have put it up to some passing naughty behaviour. The Soviets, for instance, when their little Sputnik reached the outer layers of our earth's atmosphere, prompted the child to make a fool of itself by the giddy boast that it had proved the non-existence of the Christians' heaven; a boast which was greeted, as it was probably intended to be, with a world-wide amused and incredulous guffaw.

Some of the other friends of spaceship travel, reflecting on the vast reaches of space discovered by its industrious parent, modern science, have had the child hold forth on the insignificance of human beings on our earth, with the added conclusion that the Lord God, if there be a God, can hardly be expected to take any particular inter-

est in this tiny mite of matter we call the earth, or the invisibly tiny specks crawling about upon it, which are called human beings.

This "insignificance" idea, however, is typical of a child's or a new-comer's first wonder at the incredible distances in space. It assumes that importance is measured by size or weight or distance. The mature viewpoint, of course, is that the human beings on this planet are greater than the universe, because by reason of a quality they possess called *mind*, they can carry the entire universe around inside their tiny heads.

So too the existence of intelligent beings on other planets is sometimes brought forward as a child of modern science which constitutes an embarrassment for religion.

But intelligent beings, so far at least, exist on other planets only in the pages of science fiction; and science fiction itself is a lovable but very giddy child of sober modern science; the intelligent beings it claims to have found in other worlds are only the creatures of a child's dream-world.

To ask a question, however, about intelligent beings existing on other planets, or even circling around in inter-stellar space, poses no embarrassing nor even novel problem for religion. The question was asked and the possibility was discussed in the earliest centuries of Christianity: and the answer is as old as Christianity: if there should be such beings out-

side our own world, it still is true that Jesus Christ, as man, as a human being,

sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

It is a breathtaking thought that a human being like ourselves, who lived and died upon this earth; who breathed the air; who knew the feel of our rain upon His face and enjoyed the fragrance of our springtime; who knew what it was to be hungry like ourselves and to satisfy hunger with our good food and drink; who slept and worked, saw the sun rise and set, looked up to our stars at night; who knew the meaning of cold and heat, snow, mud, dirt, stench; who was subject even to the humiliating necessities of bodily human nature — that He, and our human nature with Him, should now be enthroned forever on a par with the almighty Creator of it all!

And yet this is the meaning of the phrase we rattled off so glibly in the catechism class: "Sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty."

He freely, mysteriously, incomprehensibly, but in sober fact, chose to cross the infinite distance from His lofty throne to seek, to find, to woo and wed to Himself, in a union closer than any earthly wedding, this human nature of ours. And when He returned on high, He took with Him, as a bride coming home, not the nature of the angels, or of space-men, or of any other creature, but this same human nature of ours.

They asked Him one night, when He was on trial for His life, and His human life depended on the answer, whether or not He claimed to be God's own Son. His reply was unhesitating and unmistakable:

You said it.

But He went on to make an assertion that in its way was just as startling:

And I tell you that you shall see the Son of Man

not "the Son of God" but "the Son of *Man*," the Human Being

seated at the right hand of the power of God and coming upon the clouds of heaven.

So whatever the future may hold in store; whatever amazing new inventions or discoveries modern science may yet give the world; even should spaceship travel, that present spoiled child of science, grow up to become as responsible and respectable as the parent that fathered it; should spaceship travel discover for an absolute fact that there exist upon other planets creatures far more highly developed intellectually than ourselves, our own race will still be God's masterpiece and bride. A member of our own race, Jesus Christ, a human being like ourselves, will be King of the intelligent creatures of space as He is King of men and angels, heaven and earth; because, as we rattled it off in our school days,

He sitteth at the right hand of God.

THE LIGUORIAN

For Wives and Husbands Only

Should the Invalidly Married Be Excluded from Christmas Family Parties?



Donald F. Miller, C.S.S.R.

PROBLEM: We are a large family, consisting of still living parents, three sons and three daughters, all of whom are married. It is our custom to spend Christmas day either with our parents, or at the home of one of the older married sons and daughters. But about three years ago, one of the younger sons entered an invalid marriage. (His first marriage broke up, and within a year he attempted marriage with another woman before a judge.) All the traditions of our family are Catholic. We were all brought up in Catholic schools, and most of us are very active in our parish affairs. This is the problem that has been argued back and forth among us for three years: Should we invite our invalidly married brother to the annual family Christmas party, or must we show our disapproval of his living publicly in a state of sin by excluding him from such parties? If he comes, he insists on bringing his so-called wife and the child they now have. The rest of us all have children too, and some feel that it is a source of scandal to them that the one who has left the Church and given up the sacraments should be accepted among us as if he were doing no wrong. Others think that by keeping him in touch with the family through these parties we may have a better chance of saving him in the end. What is the right and wrong of this matter?

SOLUTION: This is a very delicate (though all too common) problem, and both suggested solutions may be defended on moral principles if the right precautions are taken.

A preliminary observation must be made. In too many cases, the situation described is not looked upon as a serious problem at all. The family simply accepts the invalidly married member as if there were no difference between him and the other members of the family at all. "It's none of our business," they say. Or, "We should pay no attention to the marital status of any member of the family. The important thing is that the family get together."

This certainly is not the right attitude for Catholics to take. If a member of any Catholic family has publicly renounced his religion for the sake of a bad marriage, this should be looked upon as a grave problem by all the rest of the family, and the question of what attitude should be taken toward that person should be most seriously discussed, both in the light of charity and in the light of the danger of scandal to young people.

Out of such discussions may come one of two decisions, and we repeat that either one can be defended if it is made in conjunction with other clear-cut decisions.

On the one hand, it may be decided that the spiritual welfare of the fallen-away member of the family will best be

served by inviting him to the usual Christmas party. If this is decided, then it should also be planned that at least indirect efforts will be made to bring home to the erring one the tragedy of his spiritual state. Direct and bitter denunciations will ordinarily accomplish nothing. But if the rest of the family talks about religion and the sacraments and their parish affairs, in the presence of the one who is cut off from all these things, the conscience of the outcast will in some way be stirred. If any member of the family is held in special esteem and confidence by the invalidly married one, that person should make it a point to talk to the latter in as kindly and forceful a way as possible about his sad spiritual condition.

Moreover if this decision is made, all the brothers and sisters have some obligation of removing the danger of scandal to their own children by explaining to them that their one great desire and intent is to bring their erring uncle back to God before it is too late.

The other decision that may be supported by strong moral arguments is that the one who has chosen to live publicly in the state of serious sin should be ex-

cluded from family gatherings even at Christmas. The purposes here are exactly the same as those of the other decision: to use the most effective means of prodding the conscience of the sinner, and to make sure that scandal to youngsters is averted. In some families, the exclusion of an invalidly married son or daughter from family gathering is a powerful means of moral persuasion, just as in the life of the Church, the excommunication of a member of the whole family of the Church is intended to be a strong inducement for repentance to the one excommunicated.

Exclusion of a member of the family from family Christmas parties should never be motivated merely by human respect, or a bitter feeling that the family has been dishonored by the sinful conduct of one of its members. It must be motivated by true charity, that is, the desire to avoid giving any impression to youngsters that bad marriages are not so very bad after all. In too many cases, the importance of this latter phase of charity is entirely forgotten, with the effect that bad marriages are multiplied, and with them the number of souls that are lost.

OLD STORY

Archbishop Carl J. Alter of Cincinnati was at one time a counselor to a juvenile court. Thinking back to some of the double-talk he heard, he said:

"We heard many excuses for their behaviour, among them physical characteristics, constitutional inferiority, social hygiene. Some of us hoped we would hear about spiritual causes.

"We were told at one time that we must get rid of illiteracy in order to solve all the social problems. That's rubbish! It was tried in a dozen countries in Europe, as well as our own, and look at the results. A youngster would be better off blind, deaf, and dumb than to use his education to read lascivious literature.

"We've got a lot of new names for things today, but what we have to reckon with are the same old problems — original sin, the seven capital sins, the occasions of sin."

Central California Register

POINTED PARAGRAPHS

Christmas Crib Customs

Representations of the stable in which Christ was born, and of the manger in which He was laid, have become a marvellously effective means of bringing home to oneself the spiritual significance of Christmas. Perhaps at no time is it easier to meditate than when gazing at a Christmas crib.

For this reason the various customs that have been adapted by good Catholic people in regard to Christmas cribs should be encouraged and continued. Here are some of those customs.

1) Have some kind of Christmas crib in your own home. You can purchase a ready-made crib in any one of a score of price brackets, materials and sizes. Or you can buy figurines of the Christ-child and Mary and Joseph and the animals and shepherds, and build your own home-made stable around them. Set up the crib on a table or the mantle or the floor of your living room. Let it be a constant reminder to all members of your family and to guests coming into your home during the Christmas season of the essential spiritual meaning of Christmas.

2) Take the small children of your family to visit the crib in your par-

ish church at some quiet hour on Christmas day. There you have the advantage, not only of looking upon an imaginary representation of the scene of the birth of Christ, but also of knowing and telling the children that the Child Who was born in the stable is also present in the tabernacle. This twofold incentive will compel expressions of love to rise from your and your children's hearts.

3) If you live in a city that has several Catholic churches, make up a party of a few friends or relatives, or of your own family, and visit at least three different cribs in Catholic churches on Christmas afternoon. Each one will bring home to you some new understanding of the meaning of the birth of Christ for you. Each one will inspire its own spontaneous expressions of love.

The decorated evergreen tree is a nice part of the Christmas scene in homes. It is a symbol of the everlasting life Christ came to win for everybody by His life and death. But better still is the Christmas crib, either with or without a Christmas tree. This is a declaration of faith in the divinity of Christ; it is a declaration of fondest love for Him; it is a spur to loyalty to Him at any cost, because it shows Him giving up everything for love of you.

Absent from Duty

We have long felt that, of the various sins human nature can fall into, the cold-blooded and unwarranted missing of Mass on Sunday is of special malice. Theologians, in fact, make a distinction between "sins of passion," such as impurity, and "sins of malice."

In the case of the Mass-misser, there is ordinarily no motivating and overriding emotion or passion which causes the wrongdoing; it is simply a question of indifference and laziness in giving to God the public worship that is rightfully His. There is a special kind of insult to God implied in such indifference, especially when it becomes chronic. This kind of sin, repeated often, can quite readily cause one to lose the gift of the faith.

A correspondent calls to our attention a prayer for those missing Mass. It has the *Imprimatur* of Bishop Dwyer of Reno, Nevada, and is recited publicly after the Sunday Masses in his diocese.

Almighty and most merciful God,
Who willest not the death of a
sinner but that he be converted
and live,

Hear our prayers for those who,
of their own free will,

From carelessness or indifference,
Are not here today to worship

You in the holy sacrifice of the
Mass.

Grant them, we beseech You,

The light to see how empty life
is without You,

A right understanding of their ob-
ligation to adore You,

And the courage to return to their
Father's house.

And to us here present, O God
of love and tenderness,

Grant a greater appreciation of
the Mass,

And an apostolic spirit to work
and pray for those

Whose hearts are restless until
they find their rest in Thee,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be
to the Father.*

This prayer, we believe, admirably focuses attention on this important obligation for Catholics and will surely gain help for the lukewarm and lazy ones.

Copies may be secured by writing to the Carmelite Monastery, 829 No. Virginia St., Reno, Nevada.

Criminals on Wheels

Here are a few startling statistics and an appropriate comment upon them from far-off Australia. The statistics have to do with established causes of death on the highway.

In 1957, 3530 persons were killed as a result of "reckless driving."

Excessive speed was blamed for 13,200 deaths.

Driving on the wrong side of the road claimed 5,450 victims.

Passing on a hill or curve killed 220; cutting in, 190.

Passing on the wrong side accounted for 470 deaths.

Failing to signal or giving an improper signal resulted in 570 dead.

The total killed in all accidents in 1957 was 31,500. The total injured was 2,048,000.

Now for the comment, which was made by the Australian bishops in their annual joint pastoral letter for 1958. They are concerned primarily, of course, with reckless driving on Australian highways, but their reasoning holds true for this country, and with greater force, since here the slaughter is on a much greater scale.

As quoted by *America*, the bishops, after examining the relationship between the penal and the moral law, conclude that:

"Moral responsibility is to be imputed to the driver if he failed to act with reasonable care, if he had foreseen in some way that an accident was a possible effect of his kind of driving, and if the element of risk in his driving was not necessary at the time."

The conclusion from this careful language is inescapable. The careless driver is morally responsible for accidents that result from his carelessness. He is morally responsible even if he is lucky enough to escape an actual accident. Persons who drive at excessive speeds, who take deliberate chances at high speeds, can be held guilty of sin, and of serious sin, depending on the danger they set up for themselves and others.

I Believe in Mathematics

Travel is broadening, goes the saying. Certainly it helps one to realize how many kinds of people there are in the world — and it gives an insight into people's minds that in

more formal circumstances you would scarcely attain.

We are thinking now of a man we met recently, who was about as close to the typical man on the train as any. We met over the lunch table, being thrown together by the crowded condition of the dining car. He introduced himself and started a conversation immediately, ranging over his particular line of business, the good points of his home town; the circle of his acquaintances, and inevitably, religion.

The man was well-educated, evidently a shrewd business executive, an interesting and lively talker. Moreover he had much natural goodness, as could be quickly gathered from his criticism of excessive drinking, his castigations on divorce, his sincere views on other topics of morality. But here is what he said about religion:

"I am a Presbyterian. You are a Roman Catholic. But after all, it doesn't matter what we call ourselves, if fundamentally we are Christian. Everything else is accidental. If we are really Christian, you and I and all other religionists are O. K."

Now he might just as well have said: "I believe that the important thing in business is to believe in mathematics. You may contend that five and five make ten, and I may claim that five and five make eleven. But that is accidental. The fact that we both believe in mathematics makes us both O.K."

But no; as a sharp business man, our friend would never have agreed to that. Yet his own statement was just as mathematically absurd. If

one believes that Christ taught there is a hell, and another that such a doctrine is folly, it emphatically will not serve any good purpose for both to call themselves Christian. Christ either did or did not teach that there is a hell. To pretend to be a Christian without trying to find out which doctrine He stood for, or to say that He stands for contradictions such as are found in the various sects, is bordering on the ridiculous.

Yes, travel is broadening. It is saddening too, when it brings one into contact with good men who think so badly.

Teacher's Prayer

Surely among the world's most important tasks is that of the teacher. The children whose minds she helps to mold will emerge from the educational process loving God, hating Him, or (in a sense, even worse than hating Him), indifferent to Him. And for the forming of this basic attitude toward God surely the teacher must bear large responsibility, though of course not in the same measure as the parents.

The following prayer (quoted here in part) is recommended to all Catholic teachers, religious or lay. It was composed by Pope Pius XII:

"O Word Incarnate, Teacher of teachers, our most amiable Jesus, You who deigned to come into the world to show men the way to heaven with Your infinite wisdom and inexhaustible goodness, in Your kindness hear the humble supplications of those who, following in Your footsteps, would be Catholic teachers worthy of the name, showing to souls

the sure paths that lead to You and through You to eternal happiness . . .

"Fill us with Your spirit of love: love for You, only and good Master, that we may immolate ourselves in Your holy service; love for our profession, that we may see it as a most noble vocation, and not as a common employment; love for our sanctification, as the principal source of our labor and our apostolate; love for truth, so that we may never deliberately depart from it; love for souls, which we must mold and model to the true and the good; love for our students, to make them exemplary citizens and faithful children of the Church; love for our beloved youth and children, with true paternal feelings, more elevated, more conscious, and more pure in its natural simplicity.

"And you, most holy mother, under whose loving care the young Jesus grew in wisdom and grace, be our intercessor before your divine Son, and obtain for us an abundance of heavenly graces to the end that our work may abound to His honor and glory, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen."

SECRET CODE

A sarcastic English professor at a Texas college, disgusted at the poor spelling of his students, has adopted this new set of grade designations:

"A means Axceptional.

"C means Catisfactory.

"P means Phlunking."

Capper's Weekly

LIGUORIANA

THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

By St. Alphonsus
Selected and Edited by
John P. Schaefer, C.S.S.R.

THE Protestants maintain that they are not in need of the ministers of the Church that they might receive the dogmatic truths of faith. All that is to be believed, they say, is to be found in the sacred Scriptures.

In answer to them we point out, first of all, that if all authority is taken away from the Church, who will point out to us which Scriptures are true? The Church herself has declared many writings to be false and apocryphal. For instance, the Gospels of Sts. Peter, Paul, Thomas and Matthias; Psalm 151; the third and fourth book of the Machabees; the prayer of King Manasses and others.

In addition to these, however, Luther has condemned the book of Job, Ecclesiastes, the epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews and the epistle of St. James. Calvin, on the other hand, contended that these books, condemned by Luther, were the genuine and divine Scriptures.

But even granting that we have the true, inspired Scriptures, who will assure us of their true meaning? Let us take just one example: the words of the sacrament of the Eucharist,

"This is My body." Luther understood our Lord to be speaking of His very own body. But Zwingli and Calvin interpreted the words as being spoken in a figurative sense.

Many other teachers of the new faith glory in bolstering their arguments and opinions with the sacred Scriptures. But in many different things they disagree among themselves. If there be such obscurity, then, in sacred Scripture itself that many meanings may be taken from one passage, how can all the truths of faith be known from the Scriptures alone, unless the Church teaches us the true meaning of Scripture?

The Protestants reply to this with the claim that individual men are enlightened by the Holy Spirit to understand the true meaning of Scripture.

In our turn we answer: If due to a poor understanding of the Scriptures the whole primitive Church could err (and this, they contend, is what happened), how much more could individuals have erred? And, besides, how will a man learn that he has not made a mistake in accepting a certain interpretation of a passage of Scripture as the true one?

We have already noted that from the words, *This is My body*, Luther deduced the dogma of faith that the

very body of Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist. To Calvin and Zwingli, however, this was idolatry. Which of the two was enlightened by the Holy Ghost — Luther or Calvin? For what was a dogma to one was idolatry to the other.

All of the heretics have endeavored to establish their errors by their incorrect explanations of the sacred Scriptures. In this they have all been alike. But the holy Church, the true teacher of faith, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, has characterized their teachings as heresy. For this reason St. Augustine said: "I would not believe the Gospel unless the authority of the Catholic Church moved me to do so."

The dogmas of our faith must be certain. Therefore, since many doubts arise concerning them, the Lord constituted His vicar, the supreme pontiff of the Church of Rome, as the infallible judge in His Church, that he personally, or by councils approved by him, might define with infallible certainty the dogmas to be believed and the errors to be reprobated. In this manner the faithful would have a certain rule to follow.

This safe and easy rule the heretics lack. For they do not have an infallible judge to whom they are obliged to submit their judgment on the meaning of Scripture. For they declare this to be their only guide. The result is that even in their provincial and national synods they are continually at odds and are found to disagree.

Bossuet narrates that the following enactment is contained in the book on the discipline of one of the reformed religions: "Doctrinal questions are to be solved by the Word of God. This shall be done in a consistory if possible. Otherwise it should be referred to a conference, then to a provincial synod and finally to the national synod. Here the opinion finally reached by the help of the Word of God shall be solemnly pronounced. If anyone refuse to acquiesce to it entirely, and by expressly abjuring his errors, he shall be cut off from the membership of the church."

Thus, Bossuet concludes, the Protestants themselves acknowledge that the Word of God alone cannot be an infallible safeguard for them in matters of faith. There is need of the judgment of the Church to interpret the true meaning of Scripture. Otherwise the way would be open for the formation of as many religions as there are parishes and even minds of men.

We, therefore, conclude that until the heretics find a stable norm to interpret the true sense of the Scriptures with the certitude of faith, they cannot have a sure rule of faith. And they will continue to disagree, not only with other reformed churches, but even among themselves in the same church.

In this regard the famous Pufendorf, a Protestant himself, confessed: "The condition of the Papists is better than that of the Protestants. They all acknowledge the pope as bishop and head of the Church. Protestants,

however, lacking a head, are horribly cut up and mangled and go staggering about. All of the states administer and regulate everything as they please."

I will sum up my entire argument in this brief form: the Catholic Church either could not err or it could err. If it could not err, they, the Protestants, are false in their contention that it did. And if it could fall into error, then there must be found some infallible judge to define

the truths to be believed and the errors to be execrated. Scripture cannot be this judge, for it can have various meanings. And unless some infallible judge determines the true meaning, there could be as many religions as there are opinions.

Therefore, unless an infallible judge is given to all — and we say that this is in reality the Roman pontiff — neither the true Church nor the true faith can ever be found on this earth.

THE THINGS UNDONE

"Forgive us, O Lord, our sins of omission."

It is an appalling thought that our omissions — which may seem a negative thing — can often do as much damage as a sin in word, thought or deed — which is a positive act.

It is the little kindnesses which we do not take time or thought to perform which keep us from attaining the charity "that understands all things."

It is the prayers that we do not say which fail to bind us in close friendship with God.

It is the duties which we omit that mount into sins against justice.

It is the omission of patience or love of parent to child which leads to disobedience, disrespect, delinquency.

It is the omission of obedience and love of child to parent which can blight an entire life.

Archbishop Cushing

•

FASHIONS AND MODESTY

Modesty makes man hear its warning, like a forward sentinel, from the moment he acquires the use of reason, even before he learns the full meaning and purpose of chastity. It accompanies him throughout his entire life and demands that certain acts, which are good in themselves because they are divinely established, should be protected by a discreet veil of shadow and the reserve of silence, in order to confer on them the respect owed the dignity of their great purpose. It is therefore just that modesty, as the depository of such precious possessions, should claim for itself an authority prevailing over every other tendency and every caprice, and should preside over the determination of fashions in clothing.

The Pope Speaks



BOOK REVIEWS

Thomas Tobin, C.S.S.R.

We recommend that books listed or reviewed in **THE LIGUORIAN** be purchased at your local bookstore. If you cannot obtain the book in that way, you may write to **THE LIGUORIAN** for further information.

Christmas Gift Suggestions

I. FICTION

New Guest Room Book

F. J. Sheed

Prose, poetry, even a Knox detective story.

(Sheed & Ward, \$7.50)

The Finest Stories of Sean O'Faolain

Irish stories by a master craftsman.

(Little Brown and Co., \$4.75)

Angels under Wraps

Edward V. Dailey

Clever short stories about guardian angels.

(Bruce, \$2.95)

Please Don't Eat the Daisies

Jean Kerr

Witty sketches of family life.

(Doubleday and Co., \$3.50)

Street of Riches

Gabrielle Roy

Wholesome novel of French Canadian family.

(Harcourt, Brace and Co., \$3.95)

Tales of a Flier's Faith

Ed Mack Miller

Short stories by a Catholic pilot.

(Doubleday and Co., \$3.50)

Prince of Darkness

J. F. Powers

Classic short stories by a skilled writer.

(Image, \$0.85)

Saints and Snapdragons

Lucille Hasley

Humorous sketches by the author of **Reproachfully Yours**.

(Sheed and Ward, \$3.00)

II. BIOGRAPHIES

- Rafael Cardinal Merry del Val** Marie Caecelia Buehrle
Documental story of Pius X's Secretary of State.
(Bruce, \$3.95)
- From Fashion to the Fathers** Hilda C. Graef
Autobiography of the German convert author.
(Newman, \$4.00)
- Giants of the Faith** John A. O'Brien
Studies of St. Paul, St. Augustine, Chesterton, Newman, Brownson, Hecker.
(Hanover House, \$3.75)
- Thunder in the Distance** Jacques Leclercq
A Belgian priest, the apostle of modern China.
(Sheed & Ward, \$3.00)
- A Saint a Day** Berchman Bittle, O.F.M., Cap.
Short sketches of the daily feasts.
(Bruce, \$5.00)
- St. Bernadette** Margaret Trouncer
Fictionalized biography that is well written.
(Sheed & Ward, \$3.75)
- Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux** R. A. Knox
Monsignor Knox's translation of the original manuscript.
(Kenedy, \$4.50)
- Father Cyclone** Daisy Amoury
Father Larry Lynch, the chaplain killed at Okinawa.
(Julian Messner, \$3.00)
- Padre Pio** Nesta De Robeck
The Italian Capuchin stigmatic.
(Bruce, \$2.95)
- The Edge of Tomorrow** Thomas A. Dooley, M.D.
Medical mission in the East.
(Farrar, Strauss, Cudahy, \$3.75)
- Spiritual Aeneid** R. A. Knox
Convert story first published in 1918.
(Sheed & Ward, \$3.00)

III. RELIGIOUS BOOKS

- The Liturgy of the Mass** Pius Parsch
Still the best popular book on the Mass.
(Herder, \$4.95)

- My Last Book** James Gillis, C.S.P.
Last thoughts and reflections of a dying priest.
(Kenedy, \$3.95)
- Separated Brethren** William J. Whalen
Excellent source of doctrine and history of non-Catholic churches.
(Bruce, \$4.50)
- This Is the Mass** Daniel-Rops, Sheen, Karsh
Exquisite picture story of the Mass.
(Hawthorn Books, \$4.95)
- Our Lady of Lourdes** Msgr. Joseph Deery
Story of apparitions and of modern Lourdes.
(Newman, \$4.50)
- Thoughts in Solitude** Thomas Merton
Meditations from the Trappist monastery.
(Farrar, Strauss, Cudahy, \$3.00)
- Reflections on America** Jacques Maritain
A distinguished observer on our way of life.
(Scribners, \$3.50)
- What They Ask about the Church** J. D. Conway
Selection made from his articles in the Catholic Press.
(Fides, \$3.95)
- The Lord's Prayer** Romano Guardini
Short, penetrating reflections.
(Pantheon, \$2.75)
- Theology for Beginners** F. J. Sheed
Simple and profound explanations.
(Sheed & Ward, \$3.00)
- The Restless Christian** Killian McDonnell
The drive that urges the Christian to God.
(Sheed & Ward, \$3.00)
- You** Rev. M. Raymond, O.C.S.O.
Brilliant essays on the value of the individual.
(Bruce, \$4.50)
- Catholic Viewpoint on Censorship** Harold C. Gardiner, S.J.
Examination of philosophy and practice of censorship.
(Hanover House, \$2.95)
- The Risen Christ** Caryll Houselander
Our Christ-life is that of the risen Christ.
(Sheed & Ward, \$2.75)

More Than Many Sparrows
Skillful pen examines modern life.

Leo Trese

(Fides, \$2.95)

Our Lady of Beauraing
Story of apparitions in Belgium in 1932, 1933.

Sharkey-Debergh

(Hanover House, \$3.75)

IV. SPECIAL BOOKS

1. *For the Priest:*

The Priestly Life
Informal and stimulating reflections.

R. A. Knox

(Sheed & Ward, \$3.00)

Fathering Forth
A priest of 40 looks backward and forward.

John H. McGoeey

(Bruce, \$3.50)

Contemporary Moral Theology
Moral problems especially in field of human responsibility.

Ford, Kelly

(Newman, \$4.50)

2. *For the Religious:*

The Yoke of Divine Love
Skilled English Benedictine on religious life.

Hubert Van Zeller, O.S.B.

(Templegate, \$3.75)

Melody in Your Heart
Religious report on life in the convent.

Rev. George Kane

(Newman, \$3.00)

Living the Interior Life
Exhortations based on imitation of Christ.

Wendelin Meyer, O.F.M.

(Newman, \$3.00)

3. *For the Married:*

Other People
The married couple and their relations to others.

Wingfield Hope

(Sheed & Ward, \$3.00)

To Marry with Love
A married couple speaks on marriage.

Virginia, Louis Baldwin

(Bruce, \$3.95)

Christian Perfection and Married Life
Toward an ascetical theology for the married.

J. M. Perrin, O.P.

(Newman, \$1.95)

BEST SELLERS

A Moral Evaluation of Current Books, Published at the University of Scranton, Pa.

MOST POPULAR

(Not necessarily approved. Roman numeral indicates a moral rating according to categories used in general list.)

Anatomy of a Murder (IIb)—*Traver*
 The Enemy Camp (III)—*Weidman*
 Ice Palace (IIa)—*Ferber*
 The Winthrop Woman (IIb)—*Seton*
 The King Must Die (IIb)—*Renald*
 The Image Makers (IIb)—*Dryer*
 Seidman and Son (I)—*Moll*
 The Time of the Dragons (IIa)—*Ekert-Rotholz*
 Strangers When We Meet (IV)—*Hunter*
 The Northern Light (IIa)—*Cronin*
 The Greengage Summer (IIa)—*Godden*
 Travels of Jaimie McPherson (IIb)—*Taylor*

I. Suitable for general reading:

Amedeo—*Barclay*
 The Night the Fog Came Down—*Bude*
 The Case of the Triple Twist—*Bush*
 Art and Reality—*Cary*
 Our Friend James Joyce—*Colum*
 Tales of the East and West—*Conrad*
 The President's Wife—*Corbett*
 Black Mail—*Disney*
 Depart This Life—*Ferrars*
 Amy Lowell—*Gregory*
 A Little Sin—*Hardy*
 King Mob—*Hibbert*
 Servant's Problem—*Johns*
 The Sheltering Desert—*Martin*
 Cavalcade of the North—*Nelson*
 Ding, Dong Bell—*Reilly*
 Miss Maggie and the Doctor—*Troy*
 Avalanche!—*Wechsberg*

II. Suitable only for adults:

A. Because of advanced style and contents:

The Best Short Stories of Edith Wharton—*Andrews*
 The Lorelei—*Bachmann*
 Part of a Long Story—*Boulton*
 Marx and America—*Browder*
 A World of Great Stories—*Haydn & Cournos*
 Aku-Aku—*Heyerdahl*
 The American Communist Party—*Howe & Coser*
 The Musical Life—*Kolodin*
 The Soviet Cultural Scene—*Laquer & Lichtheim*
 History of the Jews in Modern Times—*Sachar*
 The Secret of Luca—*Silone*
 Starrbelow—*Thompson*
 Late Dawn—*Vandon*
 A Yankee's Odyssey—*Woodress*
 House of Many Rooms—*White*
 The Once and Future King—*White*

B. Because of immoral incidents which do not, however, invalidate the book as a whole:

Portrait of Peter West—*Butler*
 A Mixture of Frailties—*Davies*
 Admiral Hornblower and the West Indies—*Forester*
 The Sword of Pleasure—*Green*
 Fit to Kill—*Halliday*
 Echo of the Flute—*Jordan*
 City of Spades—*MacInnes*
 The Sound of the Sun—*Shipley*
 A Really Sincere Guy—*Van Riper*

III. Permissible for the discriminating adult:

Swear by Apollo—*Barker*
 The Falcon's Shadow—*Du Bois*
 Let No Man Write My Epitaph—*Motley*

IV. Not recommended to any reader:

The Devil's Agent—*Habe*
 Profane Junction—*White*

LUCID \ / INTERVALS

The new pastor was unable to get a housekeeper for quite some time, and found his own cooking not too satisfying. So he was glad to receive an invitation from one of his parishioners for dinner.

As he helped himself to the biscuits for the second time, he remarked jokingly to the little daughter of his host, "I don't often have as good a dinner as this, Janie."

"Well, I'm awfully glad you came," smiled back little Janie, "'cause we don't either."

Some men smile in the evening.



Some men smile at dawn,
But the man worthwhile
Is the man who can smile
When his two front teeth
are gone.

The flustered young man stepped up to the desk of the clerk in the county marriage bureau.

"Where is the bride elect?" asked the clerk.

"What do you mean, bride elect?" the young man retorted. "There was no election. She just appointed herself."

A woman called the bank and asked about the disposing of a \$100 check. "Is the check for redemption or conversion?" inquired the banker. There was a long pause before the woman asked, "Am I talking to a bank or a church?"

"Don't drive so fast around the corners," entreated the taxi passenger. "It frightens me."

"Just do as I do," came the reply, "Shut your eyes when we come to one."

Examiner: "State the number of tons of coal shipped out of the United States in any given year."

Student: "1492 — none."

Lady (to tramp): "If you're begging a favor, you might at least take your hands out of your pockets."

Tramp: "Well, the truth is, lady, I'm begging a pair of suspenders."



Teacher (warning pupils against catching cold): "I had a little brother seven years old, and one day he took his new sled out in the snow. He caught pneumonia, and three days later he died."

Silence for ten seconds. Then a voice from the rear:

"Where's his sled?"

"On the day on which my wedding occurred . . ."

"You'll pardon the correction, but affairs such as marriages, receptions, dinners and things of that nature 'take place.' It is only calamities which 'occur.' You see the distinction?"

"Yes, I see. As I was saying, the day on which my wedding occurred . . ."

FILE 13

The best thing about some of the popular songs is that they are not popular very long.

Automobile finishes: Lacquer and Liquor

LIGUORIAN INDEX FOR 1958

Abstinence from meat on Friday, Mar 13
 Accident claims, what about? July 8
 Actor's problems, the, Feb 28
 Advice, where to go for, May 57
 Age, lying about to a boy-friend, Apr 54
 Age of the world, Apr 29
 Alcohol, may parents command teen-agers to abstain from? June 25
 Altar and Rosary Society, May 44
 Apostles on sickbeds, Mar 8
 Are older single people neglected by the Church? Aug 34
 Are you a victim of self-pity? July 1
 Artificial insemination, Jan 33
 Aspirin and religion, Feb 11
 Author's quandary, Aug 38

Babies, religion for, Aug 16
 Baby, whether to keep one born out of wedlock, July 48
 Baptized, why was Christ? July 50
 Battle of the generations, July 49
 Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Feb 38
 Body in the basement, the, May 22
 Brains and the Catholic Church, June 45
 Bride, here comes the, June 18
 Bridge God built in the sky, the, Dec 42
 Brothers and sisters, thoughtlessness of, Dec 18
 Brothers in religious life, Apr 40

Can professionals help in church fund-raising? Nov 28
 Candles, let them be lighted, Feb 23
 Catholic Church and teen-agers, Mar 22
 Catholic Church and Mike Wallace, Mar 32
 Catholic Press, unions in the, Apr 30
 Catholic psychiatrists, Apr 10
 Catholics, hot, cold and lukewarm, Aug 9
 Catholicism and the practices of the virtues, Nov 32
 Celibacy of priests and nuns, reason for, Apr. 12
 Charity begins abroad, Sep 10
 Child before the crib, Dec 28
 Children, how to correct sexual misconduct in small, Feb 56
 Children, none wanted, Oct 18
 Christ and the sick, Nov 46
 Christ, objections to, Sep 24
 Christ, why was He baptized? July 50
 Christ-child's neighbors, the, Dec 14
 Christmas gifts for the family, Dec 10
 Christmas, the four meanings of, Dec 1
 Church, irritations in, Mar 12
 Cocksure, on being, Jan 50
 Code of Catholic Conduct: the parish, Mar 7; persons in your parish, Apr 44; be a real parishioner, June 13; parish organizations, Aug 18; your parish and the sacraments, Oct 7; music in God's house, Dec 9
 Company-keeping while awaiting dissolution of a previous marriage, May 42
 Cradle marriages, Apr 25
 Creditor, and debtor, Aug 19
 Crime, what progress toward the perfect? Apr 1
 Cross-bearers, volunteer, Apr 34
 Crucifixion — a senseless tragedy? Apr 45
 Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible, Feb 38; Mar 41
 Death, preparing for, June 37
 Debtor and creditor, Aug 19
 Die, learning how to, Nov 15
 Disease of restlessness, the, Nov 22
 Disfiguring diseases, Jan 13
 Divorces, on dating, Oct 22
 Do you really know your religion? Feb 1
 Doctor's office, magazines in the, Jan 8
 Doctor's report on Lourdes, May 8
 Does it pay to be good? Oct 45
 Don't carry a grudge, Sep 8
 Don't excuse yourself! Nov 9
 Dying, danger for the, May 50

Eavesdropping, the morality of, Nov 15
 Engaged, privileges of the, Aug 54
 Envy the married, danger of, Oct 12
 Epilepsy, Nov 52

Ex-Catholic, strange case of the, Oct 40
 Externals in Catholic worship of God, May 12
 Extreme unction, sacrament for the dying, Nov 47

Families large, what people think of, Feb 46
 Farming and teen-agers, June 30
 Fast and abstinence, reasons for, Mar 15
 Fasting and feasting, Feb 14
 Father, a word in favor of, June 27
 First amendment, what happened to the? July 33
 Five faces of mortal sin, Mar 1
 Foreign nations, must we aid? Sep 32
 Four meanings of Christmas, the, Dec 1
 Fund-raising, can professionals help in church? Nov 28

Galileo and the dragon, Apr 5
 God is the one and only Perfect Being, Sep 19
 God, why we need, May 31
 Grace, sources of, July 17
 Grade school children and obedience, Aug 26
 Grudge, don't carry a, Sep 8

Heaven, is it all we get? Jan 10
 Holy romantic, the: St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Nov 11
 Home relationships, unhappy, Nov 36
 Hospital bills, unjust, must the patient pay? June 8
 Hot, cold and lukewarm Catholics, Aug 9
 Housewife looks at marriage and the priesthood, Sep 16
 How "scientific" is true religion? Oct 1
 How to be a good mother-in-law, Feb 17
 How to promote interracial justice, Dec 31
 Husband who refuses to be a husband, Sep 46
 Husbands and women friends in business, Aug 14
 Hypocrisy and mortal sin, June 14

I believe in God, Jan 46
 I believe in one God, June 22
 Improper conduct at parties of married people, May 29
 Impurity, the most common sin of, Nov 1
 Incense, the secret of, Oct 14
 Indifferent Catholic, what is a? Dec 22
 Indissolubility of marriage, belief in it required for a valid marriage, Mar 29
 Interracial justice, how to promote, Dec 31
 Invalidly married, should they be excluded from Christmas family parties? Dec 47
 Invitation from God, Nov 43
 Is heaven all we get? Jan 10
 Is lying always a sin? Jan 1
 Is rhythm the same as contraception? Nov 26

Job, sanctifying your, Sep 22

Kindness, killing with, Feb 29

Large families, what people think of, Feb 46
 Large families, the Pope's views on, Oct 24
 Learning how to die, Nov 15
 Legalized Murder, petition for, Oct 9
 Liguorian founder, Jan 26
 Little lessons in Catholic living: fasting and feasting, Feb 14; companionship with Christ, Mar 18; music and flowers, May 12; hot, cold and lukewarm Catholics, Aug 9; learning how to die, Nov 15
 Look at the stars, June 50
 Lourdes, doctor's report on, May 8
 Lourdes, a stay-at-home trip to, July 10
 Love finds its place, Jan 14
 Lying, is it always a sin? Jan 1

Magazines in the doctor's office, Jan 8
 Marriage, against mixed, June 36
 Marriage and the priesthood, as seen by a housewife, Sep 16
 Marriage, can it be valid without belief in indissolubility? Mar 29
 Marriage gamble, Aug 40
 Marriage is for life, why, June 1
 Marriages, cradle, Apr 25

Martyr, what is a? July 32
 Martyr, why is a? Aug 20
 Mary, health of the sick, May 43
 Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, May 57
 Mary, Virgin and Mother, Jan 19
 Mass, daily, should it be part of the curriculum in a Catholic grade school? Jan 28
 Mid-teen-agers, should they marry? Dec 26
 Mike Wallace and the Catholic Church, Mar 32
 Mistakes about prayer, Sep 42
 Morality of eavesdropping, the, Nov 15
 More, Thomas, twice married saint, Apr 20
 Mortal sin, five faces of, Mar 1
 Mortal sin and hypocrisy, June 14
 Most common sin of impurity, the, Nov 1
 Mother-in-law, how to be a good, Feb 17
 Music and flowers, May 12
 Music in God's house, Dec 9
 Must we aid foreign nations? Sep 32

Nationality of boy-friend, objections to, Jan 18
 Natural law, what is this? Sep 1
 Newman Clubs, work of the, Feb 30
 Non-Catholics, are they all lost? May 15
 Nuns, may married women ever become? Apr 24

Obedience and grade school children, Aug 26
 Objections to Christ, Sep 24
 Older single people, are they neglected by the Church? Aug 34
 Opportunity for single men, Apr 40
 Organizations, parish, Aug 18
 Our baby died, Oct 33
 Outer space, exploring, Oct 28
 Overpopulation, Dec 20

Parents of retarded children, for, Mar 48; Apr 49
 Parish lines, Feb 45
 Parish organizations, Aug 18
 Parish, persons in your, Apr 44
 Parish, the, Mar 7
 Parishioner, be a real, June 13
 Passerat, Father, Redemptorist pioneer, Oct 29
 Path to Rome, Oct 47
 Patience, weapon of, Aug 33
 Petition for legalized murder, Oct 9
 Points of friction: on being cocksure, Jan 50; killing with kindness, Feb 29; irritations in church, Mar 12; winners and losers, May 30; two cooks in the kitchen, June 26; battle of the generations, July 49; debtor and creditor, Aug 19
 Pope's authority, the, Sep 30
 Pope's views on large families, Oct 24
 Prayer, mistakes about, Sep 42
 Pre-Marriage Clinic: objections to nationality of boy-friend, Jan 18; unchaperoned vacations, Feb 44; does it cost too much to be pure? Mar 21; lying about age to a boy-friend, Apr 54; company-keeping while awaiting dissolution of a previous marriage, May 42; tragic marriage ahead, June 36; whether to keep a baby born out of wedlock, July 48; privileges of the engaged, Aug 54; on dating divorcees, Oct. 22; should mid-teen-agers marry? Dec 26
 Priests, why necessary? May 1
 Privileges of the engaged, Aug 54
 Problems of professional people: magazines in the doctor's office, Jan 8; the actor's problems, Feb 28; my son a soldier? Mar 30; the Catholic psychiatrist, Apr 10; teachers, give more homework! May 20; must the patient pay? June 8; what about accident claims? July 8; an author's quandary, Aug 38; is organic transplantation allowed? Sep 14; no children wanted, Oct 18; the morality of eavesdropping, Nov 15; what about vivisection? Dec 40
 Problems of single people: are there such problems? July 18; the need of security, Aug 24; sanctifying your job, Sep 22; danger of envying the married, Oct 12; unhappy home relationships, Nov 36; thoughtlessness of married brothers and sisters, Dec 18
 Psychiatrist, the Catholic, Apr 10
 Purity, does it cost too much? Mar 21

Radio and television for shut-ins, Sep 36
 Readers ask: virgin and mother, Jan 19; parish lines, Feb 43; saints and trivialities, Mar 11; age

of the world, Apr 29; danger for the dying, May 50; hypocrisy at weddings, June 29; source of grace, July 17; pope's authority, Sept 30; exploring outer space, Oct 28; epilepsy, Nov 52; overpopulation, Dec 20

Religion, do you really know your? Feb 1
 Religion for babies, Aug 16
 Religion, how "scientific" is true? Oct 1
 Religion, substitute for, July 44
 Resentment, what is? May 7
 Restlessness, the disease of, Nov 22
 Retarded children, for parents of, Mar 48; Apr 49
 Rhythm, is it the same as contraception? Nov 26
 Rosary and altar society, May 44
 Rules for Catholics in their social contacts, July 28

Sacrament for the dying, Nov 47
 Sacraments and your parish, Oct 7
 Sacraments, why you need the, Aug 1
 St. Alphonsus, Doctor of the Church, Aug 50
 St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Nov 11
 St. Luke, Gospel "doctor", Mar 47
 St. Thomas More, Apr 20
 Saints and trivialities, Mar 11
 Saints for the married: Saint Thomas More, Apr 20; Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Nov 11
 Security, the need of, Aug 24
 Self-pity, are you a victim of? July 1
 Separation of Church and State, what is the meaning of? Sep 48
 Sexual misconduct in small children, how to correct, Feb 56
 Should the invalidly married be excluded from Christmas family parties? Dec 47
 Sick, Christ and the, Nov 46
 Single people, older, are they neglected by the Church, Aug 34
 Social contacts, rules for Catholics in their, July 28
 Soldiering as a vocation, Mar 30
 Spiritual Communion, what is? July 20
 Stars, look at the, June 50
 Strange case of the ex-Catholic, Oct 40
 Substitute for religion, July 44
 Sunday Mass, why people come late for, June 49

Talking about the faults of others, Apr 19
 Teen-agers and the opposite sex, Jan 20; and the Catholic Church, Mar 22; and farming, June 30; and late hours, Aug 7; and dating, Oct 20
 Teen-agers, may parents command them to abstain from alcohol? June 25
 Temper, so you have a! June 9
 Thoughtlessness of married brothers and sisters, Dec 18
 Thoughts for the Shut-in: disfiguring diseases, Jan 13; Gospel by a doctor, Mar 47; volunteer cross-bearers, Apr 34; Mary, health of the sick, May 43; preparing for death, June 37; weapon of patience, Aug 33; listening and looking, Sep 36; Christ and the sick, Nov 46
 Transplantation, organic, allowed? Sep 14
 Two cooks in the kitchen, June 26

Unchanging faith, Oct 57
 Unhappy home relationships, Nov 36
 Unions in the Catholic press, Apr 30

Vacations, unchaperoned, Feb 44
 Virtues, Catholics and the practice of, Nov 32
 Vivisection, what about? Dec 40

Weddings, hypocrisy at, June 29
 What do you believe? — I believe in one God, June 22; God is the one and only perfect Being, Sep 19
 What happened to the first amendment? July 33
 What is an indifferent Catholic? Dec 22
 What is a martyr? July 32
 What is resentment? May 7
 What is spiritual Communion? July 20
 What is the meaning of the separation of Church and state? Sep 48
 What is this natural law? Sep 1
 What! No meat today? Mar 13
 What people think of large families, Feb 46
 What progress toward the perfect crime? Apr 1
 White sails on the Amazon, Jan 34
 Why is a martyr? Aug 20

Why marriage is for life, June 1
 Why people come late for Sunday Mass, June 49
 Why priests and nuns don't marry, Apr 12
 Why priests are necessary, May 1
 Why we need God, May 31
 Why you need the sacraments, Aug 1
 Winners and losers, May 30
 Wise men still come, the, June 45
 Wives and husbands only, for: artificial insemination, Jan 33; how to correct sexual misconduct in small children, Feb 56; can marriage be valid without belief in indissolubility? Mar 29; may

married women ever become nuns? Apr 24; improper conduct at parties of married people, May 29; may parents command teen-agers to abstain from alcohol? June 25; husbands and women friends in business, Aug 14; a husband who refuses to be a husband, Sep 46; is rhythm the same as contraception? Nov 26; should the invalidly married be excluded from Christmas family parties? Dec 47
 Woman's work, Feb 7

Your parish and the sacraments, Oct 7

MODERN PREACHING AIDS

We wish to praise particularly those preachers of the divine word who, aware of their duty to preserve in their integrity the morals of those to whom they minister and whom they lead along the path of truth, make good use of the means provided by motion pictures, radio, and television to this end, and thus share with their flock the genuinely salutary benefits and inventions which our times have introduced. We therefore desire that those who wield authority, either in Church or state, should support in a special way the activity and enterprise of these preachers.

The Pope Speaks

THE MANTLE OF CHARITY

They still tell this story in the little towns of Italy, and the thousands of towns over the world where there are Dominicans — those penniless, yet rich, men and women who vow poverty and chastity, and devote their lives to charity.

Catherine of Siena, the daughter of a rich family, left her heritage of ease to become a Dominican nun. One freezing day she encountered an old and poorly-clad man who was shivering in a hallway. Quickly, and without any hesitation, she took off her heavy mantle and placed it on his shoulders.

The onlookers were shocked, and one was bold enough to tell Catherine that it was unseemly for a daughter of God to walk the streets without a mantle. To which she replied gently:

"I would much rather be found without a mantle than without charity."

Guideposts

TO SEE GOD

The secret of sanctity is to see God in everything. Let us often remind ourselves that there is not a moment of the day, not a happening in our life, but is permitted or willed by God, in order that we may use it to testify our love for Him. Let yourself be gently led, day by day, by the graces which the good God grants you. Let all circumstances which arise, foreseen or unforeseen, agreeable or disagreeable, serve you as instruments of well-doing and draw you nearer to our Lord.

Cardinal Merry del Val

Amongst Ourselves

THE wishes and prayers of all the priest-editors of THE LIGUORIAN go out with this issue to all our readers, including the many new readers who will receive their first copy as a Christmas gift, that they may all enjoy a truly blessed and happy Christmas. This wish is reflected in many of the articles contained in this Christmas issue, in which we try to bring home the lesson of how much God did for all of us in becoming a child, and what each of us must do to make personal the eternal benefits which the Christ-child came to bestow.

This Christmas issue will be followed by the regular monthly issues of 1959, each one dedicated to explaining, clarifying, detailing and exemplifying more of the specific, practical teachings of Christ and of His Church. To new readers, and for the reassurance of older readers, we restate our policy in publishing THE LIGUORIAN. We accept no paid advertising for the pages of our publication; we publish no begging appeals; we promote no "causes." We ask only for the attention of our readers to the presentation and explanation of the truths and convictions offered in THE LIGUORIAN.

This does not mean that we do not expect our readers on occasion to disagree with some of our views or opinions or statements. By no means! We ask for attention, not for complete agreement with every stand we take. In some things, of course, we shall be expressing revealed or defined Catholic doctrine, or universal moral laws, or serious commands of the Catholic Church. In these cases the disagreement of a reader would not be merely with us but with Christ

Himself, or what amounts to the same thing, with His Church. Thus, for example, when we state that birth-prevention is never lawful, or that Catholics are bound, if they can do so, to send their children to Catholic schools, we are not expressing *our opinions* but precepts or laws binding on all. Our purpose will be to make it easier for all to understand why such laws are universally binding; but no doubt there will be those who will refuse submission to the will of Christ and even write to us in violent defense of their rebellion. We publish such letters only in order to make the truth more clear by contrast.

IN other matters we shall not be expressing firmly established and universally binding laws or precepts or principles, but our own opinions and convictions concerning the application of principles to individual cases or current modern problems. In many of these matters there will be room for difference of opinion amongst our readers. What we ask is that *all readers read the reasons for our opinions in disputed or controverted matters, and not just cancel their subscription in a huff because we hold an opinion contrary to theirs.*

All of us can learn by looking at all sides of questions, not by doggedly refusing to look at any other opinion than our own. THE LIGUORIAN will always *try* to make it clear when it is presenting truths that must be believed by all Catholics, and when it is presenting opinions on a subject in regard to which there can be legitimate different points of view.

Your Best Christmas Gifts

You are limited in regard to the ways in which you can bring grown people closer to Christ. You cannot pick them up and carry them. You cannot push them or pull them. You can only act on their mind by helping them to know Christ, and on their will by inspiring them to love and serve Him.

The easiest way to assist the minds and wills of those whom you wish to make happy is to give them reading matter about Christ and His will and His promises and His love. *The Liguorian* is such reading matter. Give a year's subscription starting with this Christmas issue to many whom you love. You will bring them closer to Christ.

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